

THE
CAVALRY
OF THE
ROMAN
REPUBLIC



JEREMIAH B. McCALL

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THE CAVALRY OF THE
ROMAN REPUBLIC

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Cavalry combat and elite
reputations in the middle and late
Republic

Jeremiah B. McCall



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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AbhMünch</i>	Abhandlungen der Philosophisch-philologischen Classe der K. Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, München
<i>AJA</i>	American Journal of Archeology
<i>AJP</i>	American Journal of Philology
<i>AncW</i>	Ancient World
<i>AntAfr</i>	Antiquités africaines
<i>Ath n.s.</i>	Athenaeum new series
<i>BCH</i>	Bulletin de Correspondance Hellenique
<i>C.I.L.</i>	Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum
<i>CP</i>	Classical Philology
<i>CQ</i>	Classical Quarterly
<i>CR</i>	Classical Review
<i>DialArch</i>	Dialoghi di archeologia
<i>Historia</i>	Historia. Zeitschrift für alte Geschichte
<i>I.L.S.</i>	Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae
<i>JMH</i>	Journal of Military History
<i>JRS</i>	Journal of Roman Studies
<i>MÉFR</i>	Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'École française de Rome
<i>MilMit</i>	Militargeschichtliche Mitteilungen
<i>Phoenix</i>	Phoenix. The Classical Association of Canada
<i>Rphl</i>	Revue de philologie, de littérature, et d'histoire anciennes
<i>RivFil</i>	Rivista di filologia e d'istruzione classica
<i>Wfut</i>	World Futures
<i>Whist</i>	War in History

CAVALRY SERVICE AND ELITE REPUTATIONS

The problem of the citizen cavalry's disappearance

Throughout the middle Republic the wealthiest Roman citizens supplied a cavalry contingent to every field army. Each cavalryman was liable to serve a maximum of ten years between the ages of 17 and 46. Cavalry service was a distinguished form of service and an important mark of elite status. Nevertheless, in the early first century B.C.¹ tactical units of citizen cavalry disappeared and foreign auxiliaries supplied all of Rome's cavalry. The Romans had ended an institution that had lasted for centuries.

The traditional explanation for the end of the Roman citizen cavalry corps has persisted for the better part of a century and received wide support from historians. The Romans, according to this explanation, were simply poor cavalymen. They lacked any native tradition of cavalry service, were unskilled as mounted warriors, and were ineffective against enemy cavalry. Only too aware of the deplorable abilities of their citizen cavalymen, the Romans looked for a solution.² Foreign auxiliary cavalry were the answer. Foreign peoples – particularly the Numidians, Spanish, and Gauls – possessed cavalry forces categorically superior to the Roman citizen cavalry. Consequently, the Romans began to rely increasingly upon these superior foreign cavalry forces in the second century. Over time the auxiliaries replaced both the citizen cavalry and the Italian allied cavalry. By the first century there was no military need for the poor quality Romano-Italian cavalry, and they disappeared from the legions.³

This traditional argument has substantial problems. No one has ever demonstrated the citizen cavalry's ineffectiveness. To date there is no systematic analysis of the Roman cavalry's military

effectiveness. Historians who have denigrated the Roman cavalry's abilities do so in the space of a page or two. The specter of the Second Punic War (218–201) is often invoked. During the early years of this war, the Roman cavalry suffered three significant defeats. Proponents of the traditional argument have generally assumed that three defeats in three years sufficiently demonstrate that the Roman cavalry had been deficient for centuries. Similarly, passing references to effective foreign cavalry forces have been seemed sufficient to prove that foreign cavalry forces were categorically superior to Roman cavalry. This whole approach lacks the rigor necessary to support such sweeping statements. We cannot accurately assess the military effectiveness of the Roman cavalry without systematically analyzing the available evidence.

An even greater problem of interpretation resides in the traditional argument. By explaining the disappearance of the citizen cavalry as a primarily, if not exclusively, military phenomenon, supporters of this argument have neglected to consider the social and cultural ramifications of the citizen cavalry's disappearance. This approach obscures the essential importance of cavalry service to the elite.⁴ Before we can understand this and fully appreciate the problems with the traditional argument, however, we must identify those Romans who served in the cavalry and outline some of the connections between cavalry service and elite status in the middle Republic.

CAVALRY SERVICE AND ELITE STATUS

The earliest citizen cavalrymen were the *equites equo publico*, elite Romans who rode horses subsidized by the state and voted in the prestigious eighteen equestrian centuries of the centuriate assembly. Later, wealthy Romans who served on their own mounts – the *equites equis suis* – began to supplement the force of *equites equo publico*. Rawson suggested that only the *equites equo publico* served in the first four legions, the legions commanded by the two consuls; the *equites equis suis* would only serve in years when the Romans fielded more than four legions.⁵ On the contrary, *equites equis suis* clearly served in the first four legions by the third century. Cato the Elder mentioned his grandfather had earned military honors several times for valor in battle. As a reward for his bravery, the state reimbursed him for the five horses that he had lost in combat.⁶ Cato was born *circa* 234,⁷ and his grandfather must have been liable for military service beginning *circa* 273.⁸ Cato's grandfather was clearly

an *equus equo suo*: the senate reimbursed him for the five horses he had lost, meaning he had served in the cavalry at his own expense. Equally clearly, Cato's grandfather must have served in one of the four consular legions, since the Romans rarely, if ever, fielded more than four consular legions annually until the end of the third century. He must have served with *equites equo publico*.

Since *equites equis suis* served with *equites equo publico*, it appears all eligible men – those belonging to the equestrian voting centuries and those possessing the equestrian census – formed one undifferentiated pool of cavalry recruits. The Romans, apparently, made no military distinction between cavalry troopers with state horses and troopers serving on their own horses.⁹ Our authorities confirm this lack of distinction. According to Livy, the men who volunteered to serve as cavalry were called *equites*, suggesting they enjoyed the same title for military purposes as the *equites equo publico*.¹⁰ Polybius certainly made no distinction between service on a public horse and service on one's own mount.¹¹ We should expect nothing else. The rank of *equus equo publico* was honorary and provided its bearer with social prestige and an important position within the centuriate assembly. For military purposes, however, there was no practical reason for the Romans to differentiate between service on a public or private horse.

The primary criterion for service in the cavalry was wealth, an important link between cavalry service and elite status. At some point before the Second Punic War (218–201) and probably as early as the beginning of the third century, a distinct equestrian census – a property minimum for cavalry – existed, formalizing the amount of wealth necessary to qualify for cavalry service. A fair amount of evidence indicates an equestrian census existed in the Second Punic War, and historians have generally recognized its existence at some point before 218.¹² Polybius transmitted the record of available Roman manpower in 225. By his reckoning, the Romans and Campanians had a combined total of 250,000 infantry and 23,000 cavalry.¹³ Polybius' source clearly distinguished between those liable for infantry service and those liable for cavalry service. That his source could make this distinction suggests the Romans maintained a list of those who owed cavalry service. Livy also implied the existence of such a list during the Second Punic War. According to him, the censors for 209 compiled the roll of senators, passing over eight men in the process. Then they turned to the *equites equo publico*. The censors deprived those *equites* who had served at Cannae of their public horses and forced them to serve

an additional ten years with their own horses. Finally, the censors punished a large number of Romans, “who ought to have served in the cavalry” (*equo merere deberent*). These citizens had been at least 17 years old since the war’s beginning but had shirked their duties. The censors reduced them to the lowest citizen rank of *aerarii*.¹⁴ The fact that the censors recognized a special category of citizens who were not *equites equo publico*, but nevertheless owed cavalry service, indicates an equestrian census existed along with its corollary, a list recording the names of those who owed cavalry service. The evidence for the foundation of Latin colonies offers compelling corroboration. Settlers for Latin colonies – colonies that modeled their constitutions on that of Rome – were organized according to their wealth into groups of *equites*, *pedites* (infantry), and, occasionally, *centuriones*. This was true at least as early as the foundation of Placentia and Cremona in 218.¹⁵ Apparently, the term *equites* had become a technical term by the late third century, referring to a distinct class that was superior, in economic terms, to the infantry.¹⁶

Further evidence from the second century confirms that a specific amount of wealth was the criterion for service in the cavalry and that the qualification for cavalry service was higher than for infantry service. In a speech nominally dated to 196, Livy had Nabis of Sparta state to the Roman consul, “you select your cavalry according to their census, and you select your infantry according to their census.”¹⁷ Polybius said of the levy of his day, “[the cavalry] are selected by the censor according to wealth.”¹⁸ Since Polybius indicated the censors specifically chose cavalry according to their wealth, the most natural interpretation of this passage is that an equestrian census existed in Polybius’ day that separated the wealthiest citizens from the rest of the Romans.¹⁹

An equestrian census, higher than the census for the first class of infantry, existed by the late third century. Gabba, however, offered a plausible argument for dating the equestrian census as early as the beginning of the third century. The very existence of an equestrian census seems tied to the tribal levy.²⁰ Polybius described the tribal levy in the following terms:

The division and appointment of the tribunes having been so made that each legion [of the four being levied] has the same number of officers, those of each legion take their seats apart, and they draw lots for the tribes and summon them singly in the order of the lottery. From each tribe they first of all select four lads of more or less the same age and

physique. When these are brought forward the officers of the first legion have first choice, those of the second second choice, those of the third third, and those of the fourth last. Another batch of four is now brought forward, and this time officers of the second legion have first choice and so on, those of the first choosing last. A third batch having been brought forward the tribunes of the third legion choose first, and those of the second last. By thus continuing to give each legion first choice in turn, each gets men of the same standard. When they have chosen the number determined on – that is when the strength of each legion is brought up to four thousand two hundred, or in times of exceptional danger to five thousand – the old system was to choose the cavalry after the four thousand two hundred infantry, but now they choose them first, the censor selecting them according to their wealth; and three hundred are assigned to each legion.²¹

Property qualifications do not seem to have mattered much in the tribal levy. The men in the tribe liable for military service presented themselves to the levy-officers as a tribe undivided by property distinctions.²²

Because the Romans at the tribal levy were not sorted by centuries or wealth, the censors had to maintain a list of those whose wealth made them liable to serve in the cavalry. The creation of this list necessarily involved separating the wealthiest citizens from the remainder of those possessing the first class census.²³ The existence of such a list presumes an equestrian census, a property-minimum distinguishing Romans who could afford to serve on their own horses from those who could not. If Gabba was right that the tribal levy was first instituted in the early third century,²⁴ then it is highly likely the equestrian census also existed at that point.²⁵

The equestrian census bound together the wealthiest Roman citizens into a loose group that we may term, for convenience sake, the cavalry class. Essentially, this cavalry class consisted of two socio-political sub-groups. The first was the Roman aristocracy, those Romans who had won election to curule office and so, under normal circumstances, could expect to be enrolled in the Roman senate. These Romans stood at the pinnacle of the elite. A much greater portion of the cavalry class, however, consisted of wealthy men who either could not or did not wish to pursue political careers in Rome. Some of these must have lived in or near Rome. Many of the non-

aristocratic Roman elite, however, lived in those towns of central Italy that had Roman citizenship – the *municipia*.²⁶ Nicolet's study of *equites* firmly demonstrates this point. He focused only on the *equites equo publico* – for Nicolet these were the only true *equites* – and his prosopography clearly indicates most of these Romans lived outside Rome.²⁷ We have no reason to doubt that most *equites equis suis* also lived primarily outside the city of Rome. As the wealthiest individuals in their hometowns, the members of the cavalry class formed the elite of their own region – the *domi nobiles*. The Social War only increased the numbers of *domi nobiles* in the cavalry class; when all of Italy acquired the franchise, any member of the Italian elite who had not possessed Roman citizenship now did.

Roman aristocrats and the rest of the elite formed a largely homogeneous group whose members shared a similar outlook and a common social milieu. Certainly, there were differences in lifestyle between those who barely possessed the equestrian census and the wealthiest of senators. As Wiseman has noted, however, this should not distract us from the essential homogeneity of the elite. A fortune of HS 400,000 – the size of the equestrian census by the late third century at the latest²⁸ – was quite large by absolute standards, and practically everyone who possessed a fortune of this magnitude seems to have enjoyed a similar social situation. These Romans did not labor to survive. Instead, they lived off the surpluses and rents of their properties.²⁹

As their lifestyles were similar and privileged, so were their terms of military service. Cavalry service was a privileged form of military service that acted as a bond between all members of the Roman elite. On the most basic level, the censors publicly marked those who served in the cavalry as individuals who possessed wealth above and beyond the vast majority of their fellow Romans. The equestrian census institutionalized the practical reality that only the wealthiest Romans could afford to serve in the cavalry. Most young members of the elite could expect to serve in the cavalry and while in the army they would bunk with their fellow cavalrymen, other young members of the elite. Cavalry service provided an opportunity for elite Romans from different areas to meet and build relationships. It is not unreasonable to suppose these social contacts and shared experiences of service reinforced the elite's own sense of corporate identity. This stint in the army also reinforced the cavalryman's sense of personal privilege. The Romans deemed cavalry service to be far superior to infantry service. The citizen cavalry troopers enjoyed privileges denied to their infantry counterparts. The cavalry-

man received two Attic bushels of wheat per month – in addition to barley for his horses – an amount three times greater than that received by a Roman infantryman.³⁰ Gelzer rightly inferred from this that the Roman cavalryman generally brought two servants with him on campaign, a mark of his higher status.³¹ The cavalry also received different rewards for valor than the infantry. The cavalry was responsible for checking the night sentries posted by the infantry, a responsibility that reflected its higher status. When the generals gave their morning briefings, the cavalry attended alongside the centurions and military tribunes. When generals gave rewards at the end of successful campaigns, the cavalry regularly received sums much larger than those given to the infantry.³² The Romans clearly considered it degrading for a cavalryman to provide infantry service, and cavalry troopers were forced to serve in the infantry as a form of punishment.³³ It is not surprising, therefore, that in 252, with all these marks of privilege, 400 cavalry troopers refused to work as sappers when their general commanded them to do so.³⁴

The privileges of cavalry service were not limited to army life. The cavalry enjoyed their own patron gods, the Dioscuri, temples to their exploits, like the temple to *Fortuna Equestris*, and their own special festival.³⁵ Every year the Romans held the *transvectio equitum*, a public religious ceremony and festival celebrating the Roman cavalry. The Roman cavalry rode through the streets of Rome, and each rider wore any military rewards he had earned. Apparently, only the *equites equo publico* actively participated in this parade.³⁶ Nevertheless, the *equites equis suis* must have felt some sense of pride from serving on equal terms with the *equites equo publico*.

The Romans made no military distinction between service on a public or private horse, since cavalry service was required only from a privileged economic class. All the men of this class formed one undifferentiated pool of eligible recruits, and there is no reason to assume³⁷ that *equites equis suis* ever normally suffered the degradation of serving in the infantry. Other considerations support this conclusion. First, if those *equites equis suis* not selected for cavalry service were eligible for infantry service at the same levy, they would have been effectively subjected to an unattested form of double jeopardy. Because they could be levied either as infantry or cavalry, *equites equis suis* would be more likely to serve than either *equites equo publico* or infantry. Second, the service requirements for infantry and cavalry differed. Cavalry owed a maximum of ten years of service while infantry owed a maximum of sixteen.³⁸ If

equites equis suis were liable to serve both in the cavalry and the infantry, how would their *stipendia* (years of service) be calculated? Finally, we have seen that the Romans considered infantry service far inferior to cavalry service. The cavalry received better and larger rewards and held a position of authority over the infantry. Furthermore, cavalry troopers were marked as men of wealth and status by their possession of the equestrian census. It is hardly conceivable that the Romans would make a large number of men from the socio-economic elite alternate year-to-year from a superior position of distinguished military service to a, literally, pedestrian position. It is very likely that Romans who possessed the equestrian census under normal conditions were liable to serve only in the cavalry.³⁹

Now we can begin to appreciate the strong connections between cavalry service and membership in the Roman elite. The terms and type of service and the privileges of cavalry service made it a mark of elite status. For the young man aspiring to join the ranks of the aristocracy, cavalry service was particularly important. Once a youth from an equestrian family reached 17 years of age, he was required to attend the levy and liable to serve a maximum of ten campaigns before his forty-seventh birthday. Those who had no political aspirations or fondness for military operations could expect to serve far less than ten years. Those who sought political office, however, were required to complete ten years of military service before holding office.⁴⁰ These political aspirants would generally serve their required ten years all at once, completing their term of service by their late twenties. During these years in the cavalry, an elite youth would experience something of the world, learn about military matters, and make contacts with his social peers among the cavalry and officers. Furthermore, any young man who hoped to enter the ranks of the aristocracy would seek to acquire a military reputation through distinguished conduct as a cavalry trooper and, perhaps, as a military tribune. The time spent in the military and the name one obtained there remained with an elite Roman for the rest of his life and were an important part of his identity, rank, and claim to deference from social subordinates. Lists of campaigns, collections of enemy spoils, and honorable battle scars all held great currency among a Roman elite that valued *virtus*, or "martial courage." The Roman who had earned a reputation for *virtus* was likely to impress the electorate and win political offices. He could expect to join the Senate, Rome's ruling aristocracy. A reputation for valor in battle, particularly if it grew through additional martial exploits, continued

to provide prestige and credibility for an established senator who sought to climb the rungs of the *cursus honorum*.⁴¹

The same can be said for the municipal elite. The young men from the dominant families of Roman towns must have felt a need to buttress and confirm their status, as did the scions of Roman aristocrats. Many members of the municipal elite were Roman citizens who lived in the towns of Latium, towns that shared a common language and traditions with Rome. There is no reason to suppose that the inhabitants of these towns placed any less value on martial exploits than did the Roman aristocracy. For the elite youths of these *municipia*, military service was a means to confirm their high status in their hometowns.

Even in *municipia* with different languages and traditions than Rome, the members of the local elite likely saw cavalry service as an important source of prestige. Certainly, this was the case in Campanian Capua. The elite of that city had a reputation for being superlative mounted warriors. The tombs of the wealthy cavalymen depicted mounted warriors and mounted combat, glorifying, perhaps even fabricating, the martial deeds of the warrior buried there.⁴² Campanian cavalry troopers were renowned for their prowess in battle.⁴³ The Campanian Cerrinus Vibellius Taurea, according to Livy, "was so much the finest cavalryman of the Campanians that, when he was serving in the Roman army, the only Roman to equal him in reputation was Claudius Asellus."⁴⁴ Livy's suggestion that Campanians were distinguished for their horsemanship and placed high value on skill in mounted combat complements the evidence from Campanian paintings and vases. As Frederiksen noted, "it is clear that the prowess of the Campanian *equites* in the battlefield was matched by social power at home. As so often, the traditions and trappings of military formation coloured the whole texture of civil life as well."⁴⁵ What was true for the Campanians was likely true for other municipal elites. The members of other municipal elites, because they were the wealthiest men in their hometowns, provided cavalry service. Surely they were concerned with maintaining their status in their hometowns and could use a distinguished service record to bolster their reputations. There is no reason to suppose a military reputation was unimportant for the members of these elites, for it was a means to distinguish themselves from the rest of their society.

At the beginning of the third century, social, economic, and political bonds connected cavalry service to membership in the elite, bonds that later chapters will illustrate in greater detail.⁴⁶

Nevertheless, by the early first century, the relationship between cavalry service and membership in the elite had changed. Elite youths were no longer required to perform cavalry service, and many young men served, at most, a token year or two in the military. This lapse in military obligations is itself a marked change from the middle Republic. What is even more striking, substantial numbers of young Romans held political office in the first century without serving more than a year or two in the military, a practice that contravened the established custom of the middle Republic. At the same time foreign auxiliary cavalry completely replaced both the citizen cavalry contingents and those supplied by the Italian allies. By the end of the Republic, the link between a military service record and membership in the Roman elite had diminished greatly.

Understanding these changes is central to understanding the nature of, and changes in, the elite culture of the late Republic. The traditional explanation for the termination of the citizen cavalry, however, has largely neglected the social and cultural importance of cavalry service for the elite and, therefore, is unsatisfactory. Military life and social life were not isolated spheres for elite Romans. Each overlapped and affected the other. Therefore, any explanation for the end of citizen cavalry service must consider the social and political aspects of this military change. Regardless of the actual reasons for the citizen cavalry's termination, the end of this traditional form of elite military service must have had an impact on Roman society. At the very least, we must wonder why first century elite youths were content not to serve in the cavalry. For centuries elite youths had accompanied Roman armies into battle and worked to acquire a reputation for valor that would be of great social and political value in their later lives. How was it acceptable for first century scions of the Roman elite to ride into battle no longer and give up the social and political advantages of distinguished military service? These questions should be an integral part of any analysis of the citizen cavalry. Nevertheless, they have been largely neglected in the scholarship on the Roman cavalry.

The present study offers what, to date, has been lacking: a systematic analysis of the Roman cavalry both as a military arm and as a source of social and political prestige for the Roman elite. My primary concern is why the citizen cavalry disappeared after centuries of service, and what were the ramifications of that disappearance. We must address these questions in several stages. First, it is necessary to test the assertion that the Roman cavalry was militarily ineffective, and, therefore, was simply replaced by superior auxiliary

cavalry. Chapters two through five offer a military analysis of the Roman cavalry from *circa* 300 to 100. The starting date of *circa* 300 reflects the earliest time for which we can find reasonably solid evidence of the Roman cavalry's performance. The early third century also marks the period when the *equites equo publico* and *equis suis* clearly formed one pool of legionary cavalry. The beginning of the first century, on the other hand, roughly marks the end of the Roman citizen cavalry.

To analyze the effectiveness of the Roman cavalry in this period, we must first establish standards by which to judge the Roman cavalry. Chapter two concerns the mechanics of ancient battle and the role of an effective ancient cavalry force in battle. I have relied upon the substantial scholarship on Greek and Macedonian cavalry to construct a general set of criteria for an effective cavalry force. The effective cavalry force, quite simply, was one that contributed to the overall battlefield objectives of the army.

The main factors that determined a cavalry force's ability to successfully achieve its combat objectives were equipment, tactics, and motivation. Chapters three and four compare the Roman cavalry's equipment and tactics to the standards of effective Greco-Macedonian cavalry established in chapter two. They will demonstrate that the Roman cavalry was an effective military arm according to these same standards. Equipment and tactics do not tell the whole story, however. The most important factors in the effectiveness of the Roman cavalry were combat motivation and morale. Because the outcome of ancient battles was so very dependent upon morale, we must determine what motivated the Roman rider to enter battle and keep up the fight. Chapter five covers Roman combat motivation, a major source of which came from the Roman value-system that emphasized martial courage and prized those who demonstrated courage.

The Roman rider, generally speaking, was equally, if not more, motivated than any of his opponents. The relative parity of tactics and equipment, the driving forces of combat motivation, and, generally, the successful record of the Roman cavalry in combat unequivocally refute any claim that the Roman cavalry was ineffective. Therefore, we cannot explain the disappearance of the citizen cavalry as a result of primarily tactical considerations.

Chapters six and seven examine anew the reasons for disbanding the citizen cavalry. Chapter six presents the evidence for dating the end of citizen cavalry service. The period of the Social War (90–88) and Rome's extreme manpower shortage in that war provide the

best circumstances and context for the disbanding of the citizen cavalry. Desperate for men to fill the legions, the Roman Senate likely opted to place the men of the cavalry class in the infantry.

A question, however, immediately arises. If the Senate initially disbanded the citizen cavalry – and Italian allied cavalry – in response to the manpower demands of the Social War, why did it not simply reinstate the citizen cavalry once the crisis had passed? On the other hand, why did the elite not demand the re-establishment of citizen cavalry service, and the opportunity to acquire a military reputation, after the Social War? How and why did it become acceptable for elite youths to stop performing cavalry service? Since we cannot answer this question in terms of the tactical superiority of auxiliary cavalry, we must look instead to changes in first century elite attitudes toward military service. Alternative sources of prestige must have been available that made it possible to forgo cavalry service. Chapter seven explores how the members of the cavalry class acquired reputations and confirmed status in the aftermath of citizen cavalry service. Changes in late Roman society, particularly the increased demand for legal advocates, the monetization of the economy, and the vastly increased amounts of wealth needed to compete within the elite, had great impact on elite attitudes to cavalry service. In a society and culture where money, education, and oratorical ability had become dominant markers of status, cavalry service had become irrelevant. No longer valued, citizen cavalry service ended.

ASSESSING THE ROMAN CAVALRY'S MILITARY EFFECTIVENESS

Lieutenant-Colonel Denison's 1877 work, *A History of Cavalry*, contains the most recent serious treatment of the Roman¹ cavalry in the Republic. Denison asserted that the Romans were not naturally a cavalry nation and proved to be inefficient horsemen until the end of the third century. They did not understand the "true genius" of the cavalry to serve as a shock force and charge into infantry formations at high speed. The Romans learned the true use of cavalry from Hannibal, who was

first in the West to use cavalry on the field of battle in accordance with the true spirit and genius of the force. Under him, the horsemen in large masses were hurled with impetuous fury upon the foe, the victory being gained by the overwhelming rush of the charging squadrons.²

According to Denison, Scipio Africanus instructed the Romans in the proper tactical uses for cavalry, and the cavalry reached its peak at the end of the Second Punic War. Although the Roman cavalry did not maintain its high quality, it still continued to be a valuable and effective force until the end of the Republic.³

Unfortunately, Denison's work contains substantial problems. While his understanding of modern cavalry tactics was, no doubt, extensive – he was himself a cavalry officer – he did not approach the ancient evidence critically and unfailingly accepted the testimony of his sources as fully accurate eyewitness accounts. Furthermore, his study of the Roman cavalry, though far longer than any other, is still cursory at best. He left unconsidered the period from the fifth century to the Second Punic War and neglected

the 120 years between the Second Punic War and the eastern campaigns of Sulla. As a result, Denison did not examine the cavalry of the middle Republic beyond the Second Punic War. He never demonstrated that the Roman cavalry was substandard before the Second Punic War, nor did he demonstrate that the cavalry's quality declined after Scipio Africanus died. Finally, he did not concern himself with the specific mechanics of cavalry combat, leaving unexplained what exactly it meant to be, "hurled with impetuous fury upon the foe." Denison's work does not provide a thorough, systematic analysis of Roman cavalry combat in the middle Republic.

No one since Denison has attempted to analyze the Roman cavalry in combat. Nevertheless, this vacuum has not deterred scholars from offering passing opinions on the Roman cavalry's military effectiveness. Adcock devoted just a page in *The Roman Art of War* to list why the Roman cavalry was inferior: good cavalry commanders were rare, cavalry is inherently difficult to keep efficient, and the lack of stirrups hindered horsemen. Other ancient cultures were able to overcome these limitations. The Romans never cared to do so because their temperament was, "in a literal sense pedestrian"; as a nation devoted to infantry, the Romans were uninterested and unable to develop their cavalry.⁴ Kildahl in his biography of Marius also quickly dismissed the Roman cavalry:

The Romans never used the cavalry except for scouting missions and for harrying and pursuing a beaten enemy. The primary strength of the Roman army lay in its infantry which bore the brunt of fighting, and the art of blending infantry and cavalry tactics did not become widely known until half a century later [than Marius].⁵

Hill also took but a moment to dismiss the cavalry's effectiveness in *The Roman Middle Class*. He considered accounts attributing great military value to the cavalry in the third and second century to be mere annalistic conventions; by the end of the fourth century the infantry was Rome's dominant combat arm. Neither the Romans nor the Italians were ever more than moderately successful as cavalry, and the struggle with Hannibal clearly revealed their weakness. The Romans ultimately compensated for this weakness by replacing citizen and Italian cavalry with mercenaries from peoples who had skilled cavalry. This process of replacement began with Scipio Africanus, who used Numidian cavalry in the Second Punic War. As time passed, elite Romans grew less inclined to risk their lives

in cavalry service; by the late second or early first century, foreign cavalry completely replaced Romano-Italian cavalry.⁶ Essentially, Hill believed that the disappearance of the citizen and Italian cavalry was due primarily to considerations of military effectiveness.

Hill is one of a number of scholars who have maintained the Romano-Italian cavalry was qualitatively inferior to foreign cavalry. Therefore, the Romans relied increasingly upon superior foreign cavalry, eventually phasing out citizen and Italian cavalry service.⁷ As recently as 1992, Dixon and Southern repeated this assertion in their study of imperial cavalry.⁸ None of these scholars has made any attempt to test this assertion through systematic analysis of the available evidence. Instead, many historians have accepted this explanation as something of a truism, relying upon generalizations about the inferior quality of the Roman cavalry compared to foreign riders. These generalizations, however, have not been substantiated.

This hypothesis cannot be tested adequately without first determining what an effective ancient cavalry force could and should have been. Only after we have determined this can we assess the military effectiveness of the mid-Republican Roman cavalry. The best way to establish valid criteria for effective ancient cavalry is to refer to the substantial scholarship on ancient Greco-Macedonian cavalry. Scholars studying Greek and Macedonian cavalry have defined the criteria of effective ancient cavalry forces with great consistency. Even more important for our purposes, scholars have agreed that the Macedonian heavy cavalry serving under Alexander the Great represented the pinnacle of ancient cavalry. Using these criteria for effective ancient cavalry, we can then judge the performance of the Roman cavalry.

Standards of effectiveness for ancient combat are not relative. An effective combat army was one that could regularly achieve its defined combat objectives – objectives that contributed directly to the army's victory. Warfare for Greeks, Macedonians, and Romans – as well as for most other ancient Mediterranean and European peoples such as the Gauls and Germans⁹ – was fundamentally similar in its structure and, therefore, in its combat objectives. Regardless of any differences in their styles of fighting, battles for all three societies primarily consisted of encounters between large formations of more-or-less close-order infantry. Infantry formed the vast majority of most ancient armies, and the defeat of enemy infantry was the prime condition for achieving a battlefield victory.¹⁰ Because Roman, Greek, and Macedonian battles all focused on contests between close-order infantry, and all three types of armies shared this main

criterion for a battlefield victory, there are considerable grounds for comparing the cavalry in these societies. The criteria for effective cavalry in Greco-Macedonian armies are fully applicable to Roman cavalry.

The most important measure of effective cavalry was its ability to help defeat the enemy's close-order infantry formations. Tarn noted:

Given a strong cavalry force, there were three uses you could make of it. You could merely fight with the enemy's cavalry; or you could take his infantry in the flank or rear; or you could break through his line. Alexander used all three methods, but merely to defeat the enemy cavalry was clearly to him the least important, and it was unfortunate that this [last usage] became the regular object of Hellenistic warfare.¹¹

While an effective ancient cavalry force would perform important functions apart from fighting in pitched battles – harassing enemy marches, attacking foragers, screening troop movements, and reconnaissance – harming enemy infantry formations was the most important role for the cavalry.¹² Other tasks might be necessary for winning a war or preparing for a battle, but once the battle had begun, the most important task a cavalry unit could perform was harming and defeating enemy infantry.

How exactly could the cavalry help defeat enemy infantry and contribute to the army's victory? Before we can understand the cavalry's role in harming enemy infantry, we must examine the dynamics of ancient battles between dense infantry formations. Morale was the decisive factor in these battles. Ardant du Picq was the pioneer who considered human behavior and morale to be the primary factors governing combat.¹³ A French colonel who lost his life to a Prussian artillery shell in 1870, du Picq was fascinated with the role of morale in combat. His study of ancient combat focused upon the battles of Cannae and Pharsalus but also included evidence from a number of other battles. Du Picq sought to explain two interesting phenomena: casualties in ancient battles appeared extremely one-sided, as the victors lost only a tenth of the casualties suffered by the defeated, and small forces often defeated significantly larger forces – the case at both Cannae and Pharsalus. He argued that these phenomena reflect the contest of morale at the root of ancient battle. Ancient battles were not simply crude *mêlées* where both sides mingled in a brawl. If this had been the case, the

numerically inferior force would have lost consistently. In reality, infantry fought in close formations where only the front rank of each side, limited by the short reach of close-combat weapons, could actually inflict physical harm. Meanwhile, the rear ranks suffered great amounts of stress, watching the fighting, hearing and seeing the wounded and the dying only several paces away, and yet, because they remained inactive, having no outlet for that stress. The psychological pressure of watching and waiting for one's turn to fight could cause formations to disintegrate.

The irony, according to du Picq, was that flight did not provide safety for the defeated, but ensured their destruction. So long as he remained in formation, each infantryman protected his companions and *vice versa*. The solid front-line ensured that only the front-rank combatants were within range of the enemy infantry's weapons and capable of being physically harmed. Most casualties occurred when soldiers left the safety of their formation and opened themselves to attack by the still organized victors. While the defeated focused on flight, the victors focused on slaughter. This explains why the defeated generally suffered significantly greater casualties than the victors. Confusion, fear, and panic were far more destructive than mass and weaponry because they caused soldiers to break ranks and expose themselves to slaughter.

Certainly, there are simplifications and oversights in du Picq's account of ancient battles – his complete trust of ancient casualty figures is only one immediate example. His basic method and reasoning, however, are sound. One cannot successfully analyze ancient battle without due consideration of the morale and behavior of individual soldiers. Du Picq's emphasis on the dominance of morale in ancient battle and the less significant role of physical harm has found favor with more recent scholars, most notably John Keegan. Keegan's *The Face of Battle* has had the greatest impact on recent scholarship of ancient battles. Keegan was clearly impressed by du Picq's approach and incorporated some of du Picq's principles into his own work. He analyzed the battles of Agincourt, Waterloo, and the Somme from the perspective of the individual participant and sought to explain what actually happened in battle, in terms of both physical actions and their effects on morale. Keegan also stressed the great importance of morale for determining the outcome of combat. Units broke in battle when enough individual soldiers feared slaughter or incapacitation and fled before the enemy. Once the unit broke from fear, panic, or confusion, it could no longer function on the battlefield. Therefore, victory in battle was

highly dependent on the ability of individual soldiers to resist assaults on their morale through discipline, bonds of loyalty, or other means.¹⁴

Some of the most important recent scholarship on ancient warfare has followed du Picq's and Keegan's approaches, emphasizing the role of morale and of the individual soldier in battle. Hanson's *The Western Way of War*,¹⁵ an account of the mechanics, sights, and sounds of phalanx battles in classical Greece, is indebted to Keegan's work. Because the ancient sources are often deficient in their coverage, Hanson could not reconstruct any Greek battle to the level of detail found in Keegan's descriptions of battles. Hanson, accordingly, adopted a modified approach and reconstructed an archetypical hoplite battle based on contemporary references to classical battles. He neither intended nor attempted to demonstrate systematically the importance of morale in infantry combat; nevertheless, his detailed descriptions of battles illustrate the central role of morale in keeping soldiers in formation.

Most recently, Goldsworthy used the same philosophy when examining the Roman army of the late Republic and the high Empire. A significant part of his work concerns the function of the unit in battle and the role of the individual soldier in the unit. Throughout, Goldsworthy insisted that understanding the unit in battle requires studying weapons and equipment as well as the individual soldier's morale. He espoused du Picq's assertion that morale was far more important than physical factors for determining the course of a battle. One particularly noteworthy contribution of Goldsworthy's focus on morale is the assertion that the ranks behind the first rank of a close-order infantry formation did not provide extra physical pushing power. Instead, their presence increased the overall cohesion of the unit and forced the front ranks to keep fighting.¹⁶

Culham has also contributed significantly to how we understand the role of morale in ancient battle. She offered an illuminating theoretical analysis of Greco-Roman battle-mechanics. By infantry drills, the replication of the socio-economic order in military organizations, and the maintenance of military organization in the camp, the Greeks and Romans sought to strengthen the internal cohesion of their fighting formations and minimize entropy. The state sought to train individuals to hold their positions in a formation, so that formations would retain their shape and form under the stresses of battle. Any form of stress that produced fear, panic, or confusion could generate entropy within a formation, and it was possible for

even the tiniest incident to have decisive ramifications. Stress-producing agents such as fear, confusion, panic, and injury operated upon individual soldiers in a feedback loop, sometimes dissipating harmlessly, sometimes intensifying to intolerable levels and increasing entropy within the unit. Once the entropy within a formation reached a critical level, the formation would disintegrate and its soldiers would flee, surrendering the field and making themselves targets for slaughter. Ultimately, this disintegration was a form of chaotic transformation. Because disintegration occurred in a non-linear fashion, Greek and Roman command structures could neither prevent the disintegration of infantry formations nor stop it once it had begun.¹⁷

Culham's work provides an excellent descriptive model for ancient infantry battles and is based firmly on the testimony of our sources. Her model also complements nicely the evidence amassed by Hanson, Goldsworthy, and others. Together, these significant battle studies demonstrate the importance that attacks on morale had for generating entropy. Once two opposing bodies of infantry engaged, they were restricted to hand-to-hand fighting. The range of *mêlée* weapons extended only a few feet, and the actual killing was essentially limited to the first and, perhaps, second ranks of combatants. Those behind the front ranks watched and waited for their turn to replace the slain, wounded, or exhausted soldiers.¹⁸ Because killing was limited to those few actually engaged in combat, it played a less important role in determining the outcome of battle. A decision in ancient battle was rarely, if ever, the result of one army suffering too many casualties and losing its physical capacity to fight, but occurred when one army's formations disintegrated and were no longer capable of functioning on the battlefield. Men fought and died in battle. But it was the fear of death or injury that, ultimately, broke apart a unit.¹⁹

The disintegration of an infantry unit almost always destroyed the individual soldier's ability to fight effectively. So long as a group of massed infantry maintained its formation, it gained strength and protection physically and psychologically. The front rank led the formation into battle and did the actual fighting while the ranks behind the first pushed the formation forward – psychologically if not physically – and prevented the front rank from fleeing.²⁰ While the unit maintained its cohesion, each individual could not only defend himself but also help protect those by his side. Once the formation disintegrated, each individual lost the protection and sense of security the formation had provided. Chaos reigned as a

cohesive unit degenerated into a mob of individuals.²¹ Hanson described how this process of disintegration might have occurred. He referred to classical Greek hoplites, but his comments are applicable to all ancient close-order infantry formations, which gained their strength from the proximity and interdependency of their constituent soldiers:

First [when one point in the battle line collapsed], there would have arisen on one side of the battle line the element of self-interest: each hoplite, in varying degrees depending on his position relative to the point of the collapse and on his own physical status, confronted the ever-growing danger posed by remaining in rank within the phalanx, fighting to the bitter end . . . In a matter of seconds, each soldier, sensing that the battle was lost and that rank after rank was falling away from the rear, would have to decide when, how, and if he could make good his escape.²²

Flight usually followed disintegration as panic overtook the soldiers, who no longer enjoyed the safety of their formation. Most casualties occurred when soldiers fled because they no longer protected one another and turned their backs to the enemy as they ran.²³ From the perspective of close-order infantry, therefore, the most important goal was to maintain their formation at all costs while disrupting the enemy formations through psychological and physical harm.²⁴

Now that we have considered the role of close-order infantry in ancient battle, it is time to consider the role of cavalry in battle. Again, the ultimate condition for battlefield victory was the disruption of the enemy's infantry formations. The effective cavalry attack against infantry, while inflicting some physical damage on individual soldiers, primarily damaged the morale of infantry, increasing the entropy within an enemy infantry formation. As foot-soldiers were slain, frightened, or disoriented, they became distracted and increasingly interested in self-preservation. Under these circumstances the disruption within their collective formation increased. If the cavalry attack disrupted the enemy infantry beyond a certain point, the infantry unit would disintegrate, and the individual combatants would flee the battlefield. This ability to cause enemy formations to disintegrate could make the difference between victory and defeat.

For "shock" cavalry – cavalry that engaged primarily in close-quarter combat – there were two basic methods for disrupting infan-

try formations: attacking the front of the formation or attacking the flanks and rear as the infantry attacked along the front. The efficacy of the first method is the most debated. Historians have spilled much ink over whether an ancient cavalry force, or any cavalry force for that matter, could successfully charge the front of an unbroken close-order infantry formation. Scholars have generally cited Keegan for his assertion that a rider cannot impel a horse, under normal circumstances, to collide with an object that it cannot see through or jump over – massed infantry in this case. On the other hand, a soldier, unless he is very knowledgeable in the ways of horses, will not stand in the path of a running horse. Accidents resulting in collisions between horses and men must have occurred in battles throughout history, but these were unnatural occurrences.²⁵ According to Keegan's principle, cavalry could successfully charge infantry, but success did not depend on any physical collision between cavalry and infantry. If the foot-soldiers held their ground, the horses would have instinctively stopped short of impact. On the other hand, if the individual foot-soldiers lost their nerve and fled, gaps would appear in the infantry formation and the unit might completely disintegrate; the cavalry charge would then have been successful. The key factors in the cavalry charge were the ability of rider, horse, and foot-soldier to withstand fear and panic.

Long before Keegan wrote, historians readily conceded that ancient cavalry could not and would not successfully collide at speed with a disciplined and unbroken formation of massed infantry. Tarn asserted, "there was one thing cavalry could not do, charge an unbroken spear-line," and offered a series of examples where Alexander the Great's cavalry either exploited a gap or caused infantry to break before contact.²⁶ Adcock concurred:

For cavalry to be at all effective in shock tactics, the most skillful horsemanship was needed together with the most resolute and unflinching will to advance. This combination was achieved by the Companion cavalry of Alexander and by some of the heavy cavalry of his Successors in the Hellenistic period. But even so, if the attack was to succeed, it must be helped by a gap or weak place in the enemy line, or it must be directed against troops less well armed and prepared to resist a charge.²⁷

These scholars agreed cavalry shock tactics could only succeed if no infantry remained to oppose the cavalry at the point of impact. A gap

in the line had to exist. If the infantry held its ground and maintained an unbroken line, the cavalry charge would fail. Subsequent scholarship almost unanimously followed suit: ancient cavalry would not, as a rule, ride into an unbroken line of close-order infantry.²⁸

Markle wished to modify this principle. He argued that the Macedonian cavalry, armed with the long cavalry *sarissa* and employed in a wedge formation, could have penetrated an otherwise unbroken line of infantry:

If a squadron of 120 horse in wedge formation charged a hoplite phalanx eight ranks in depth, the rider at the point of the wedge would slay with his lance the hoplite facing him, drop his lance, and advance with his sword against the soldier behind the one whom he had slain. The two riders stationed to his rear about six feet apart in the second rank of the wedge would advance with their lances against the foot positioned on each side of the first one killed, slay them, drop their lances, and advance with their swords. If, in the meantime the first lancer had been overpowered and slain by his opponent in the second rank of hoplites, another lancer in the third rank of the wedge, would ride forward into his position and slay the soldier in the second rank who had killed the first lancer. In a wedge of 120 lancers, there would be a total of seven lancers, one in every other rank, in file behind the first lancer. Hence, even on the unlikely assumption that no rider, after leaving his *sarissa* in the body of his first adversary, succeeded with his sword in killing a second opponent, such a wedge with its *sarissae* alone could break apart a phalanx of eight ranks in depth. Moreover, the superior weight and velocity of the horses and riders would drive the front rank of foot back against the rear ranks, throwing them into confusion and rendering them useless.²⁹

Spence, however, rightly corrected Markle's reconstruction in one significant detail: velocity was not a factor in the effectiveness of this cavalry attack. The cavalry would be moving fairly slowly by the time it engaged the enemy infantry and would enter the enemy formation in a fashion similar to modern mounted police controlling a crowd.³⁰ It is absurd to assume that, if the lead rider of the wedge died, a replacement could fill the lead position while still charging at speed. Furthermore, how could the lead lancer charge at speed and

hope to slay his opponent – assuming, which we cannot, that the rider could stay on his horse without stirrups or high-backed saddle while spearing a foot-soldier – and drop him to the ground before colliding with him? And if a collision occurred between the rider and the front rank of infantry – stiffened by the addition of seven or more supporting ranks – would this not result only in a tangled heap of men and horses? Such a tactic would be as destructive to the troopers and their horses – the latter a very expensive commodity in the ancient world – as it would to the enemy infantry.³¹ Markle's arguments do not successfully alter the general picture: when charging, cavalry did not normally physically collide with infantry.³² Still, he effectively demonstrated how a cavalry force armed with *sarissae* and employing a wedge formation might successfully engage the front of an infantry formation. This will not be of much help in the present study: the Greeks and Romans used neither *sarissae* nor the wedge.³³

While the best cavalry force might break an infantry formation unaided either by exploiting a gap, dispersing the enemy, or slowing to engage in close-combat, the efficient cavalry force more commonly and successfully attacked the flanks or rear of enemy infantry. Spence stressed that the Athenian cavalry could render sufficient psychological harm to enemy infantry by attacking the infantry's flanks. These attacks took advantage of the cavalry's greater mobility and proved very disruptive to enemy formations as the enemy infantry soldiers were forced to respond to threats from their sides. The relative immobility of the hoplite army and the superior mobility of the cavalry made it easy for cavalry to attack flanks or rear with relative impunity.³⁴ Tarn also believed that flank attacks were a possibility for cavalry, but that Hellenistic armies guarded against this possibility by using adequate defensive measures along their wings.³⁵ Adcock emphasized that the Macedonian phalanx generally pinned the enemy infantry line at one point while the cavalry served as the decisive striking force, attacking the flank or rear of the enemy infantry.³⁶

Although in general the cavalry's primary offensive goal was to disrupt enemy infantry, some mention should be made of cavalry encounters with enemy cavalry. Cavalry in antiquity had a dual function on the battlefield, acting both offensively and defensively.³⁷ A successful attack against the enemy's flank was useless if it left one's own flank open to attack. An effective cavalry force had to defend the flanks of its own infantry formations from cavalry assault while also seeking to assault the flanks of the enemy infantry. In

both roles an effective cavalry force had to be able to neutralize enemy cavalry.

The key to heavy infantry combat was the cohesion of close-order formations. An effective cavalry force regularly disrupted enemy infantry formations by either causing or contributing to their disintegration. At the same time, an effective cavalry also protected its own army from assault and disruption by enemy cavalry. What qualities enabled an ancient cavalry force to perform these tasks successfully? Spence considered the factors that most directly influenced the combat potential of the classical Greek cavalry.³⁸ These can be grouped into three categories: tactical flexibility, equipment, and motivation. Tactical flexibility is the ability to use different formations, tactics, or weaponry to deal effectively with various tactical situations. All else being equal, a cavalry force possessing multiple tactical options was more likely to succeed in battle than one with a more limited number of options. Equipment determined the ability of the rider to inflict damage as well as the rider's ability to withstand enemy blows. A cavalry force armed with sturdy weapons and heavier armor was able to inflict more damage, likely to receive fewer casualties, and able to keep more riders in action for a longer period – within limits, however, as the weight of body armor would cause both rider and horse to tire more quickly. The protective benefit of armor could also make a rider feel safer and more eager for combat. Motivation includes leadership, training, and individual motivation. A motivated cavalry force with inspiring leaders was more likely both to engage in combat and to remain in combat, whereas a less motivated force might quickly disintegrate under the stresses of combat.

Classical Greek cavalry, according to Spence, rated highly in all three categories. The Greek cavalry employed both missile weapons and close-combat weapons and could, therefore, harm the enemy both at close quarters and from a distance. Athenian cavalry, furthermore, sometimes combined with units of light infantry, thereby gaining additional tactical options. Troopers commonly wore breastplate, helmet, and heavy boots for protection, and, therefore, were armed at least as well as the hoplites they opposed. Greek cavalry was generally well motivated to fight. The cavalry was often a distinct class within the polis and enjoyed a natural *esprit de corps*.³⁹

Alexander the Great's Companion cavalry certainly met these criteria equally well. They did not enjoy the option of missile weapons as did many of their Greek counterparts, but, then, their tactics

focused upon close combat. Macedonian shock cavalry could apparently successfully attack both the flanks and front of an infantry formation, enjoyed the protection of a cuirass and helmet, and wielded a long and sturdy cavalry spear. The Companion cavalry was distinguished as the elite cavalry force of the king, a distinction that must have engendered considerable *esprit* among the riders. Furthermore, King Alexander himself generally led them and served as an excellent role model for bravery in combat. Well equipped and motivated, the Macedonian troopers generally performed their duties successfully.⁴⁰

Now that we have established criteria for judging a cavalry force's effectiveness, it remains to determine how well the Romans met these criteria. Chapters three through five survey the equipment, tactics, and motivation of the Roman cavalry. It will become clear that there are no grounds for supposing the Roman cavalry was ineffective in battle. Chapters three and four compare the Roman cavalry's equipment and tactics to the standards of Greco-Macedonian cavalry. They indicate that the Roman cavalry was an effective military arm according to the standards of contemporary Greco-Macedonian shock cavalry. Equipment and tactics are not the whole story, however. The most important factors in the Roman cavalry's effectiveness were combat motivation and morale. Because the outcomes of ancient battles depended so much upon morale, we must determine what motivated the Roman rider to enter battle and keep up the fight. Chapter five examines Roman combat motivation. A major source of Roman combat motivation came from the Roman value-system, which emphasized martial courage and valued those who demonstrated courage. Generally speaking, the Roman rider was equally, if not more, motivated than any of his opponents. Once we have established the relative parity of tactics and equipment, the driving forces of combat motivation, and, incidentally, the actual successful track record of the Roman cavalry, it can no longer be suggested that the Romans made poor cavalry.

EQUIPMENT AND TACK

The strength of a rider's weapons and armor largely determined his ability to cause and avoid injury in combat. Protective armor could also increase morale as it provided the rider with some sense of security and made the consequences of combat seem less threatening. These advantages came at a significant cost: the greater weight of the armor magnified the already difficult task of riding without stirrups or saddle. The seemingly simple act – for a trained rider – of keeping one's seat became far more difficult with the addition of thirty or more pounds of dead weight. Because equipment influenced actual striking power, morale, and maneuverability, it played a significant role in any cavalry force's combat effectiveness. Therefore, we must consider the Roman cavalry's equipment when determining its overall combat effectiveness.

The most important issue concerning Roman cavalry equipment is the transition from light arms to heavy arms. At a certain point in its history, the Roman cavalry adopted body armor, sturdier shields, and stronger spears. Explaining when and why the Romans adopted heavy armor, complete with its accompanying disadvantages, is an important part of the case that the Roman cavalry was effective during the middle Republic. Greek and Macedonian shock cavalry were equipped with cuirass, shield, and sturdy weaponry. After the Romans adopted similar equipment, one cannot claim they lacked the proper armament to function as shock cavalry and, therefore, were inferior. After the transition the Roman cavalrymen were armed as well as any ancient Mediterranean cavalry, save for the thoroughly metal-clad *cataphracts* of Syria. The importance of establishing the historical context of the cavalry reform runs deeper still. No one can suggest that the Roman cavalry was inferior because it was a static institution, incapable of adapting and developing. Rather, as we will see, when the Romans felt that their equipment was no

longer adequate for the combat situations in which they found themselves, they adopted heavier armament and regained their combat-effectiveness. This change reflects dynamic potential on the Roman cavalry's part and is an additional argument in favor of its overall effectiveness.

To determine when the Roman cavalry felt motivated to adopt heavier armor, we will need to survey the Roman cavalry's battle-record during the middle Republic. This survey has an additional benefit: it demonstrates that the Roman cavalry was very successful in battle, based on the simple criterion of victory. Of course, a simple listing of successes really tells us little about the Roman cavalry's overall quality. Furthermore, our sources are very limited, in that they describe only a handful of battles out of the hundreds, if not thousands, that occurred between 300 and 100. Nevertheless, it is success in battle that counts, and our sources record far more victories for the cavalry than defeats.

The narrative tradition does not precisely date the transition from lightly to heavily armed cavalry. To date, two competing proposals have been made for the date of the cavalry reform. Meyer dated the reform to the early second century, and Eadie followed suit, suggesting the Romans adopted Greek-style armor sometime after the battle of Magnesia (189) as a result of their encounters with Greek-style cavalry. Rawson, on the other hand, preferred to date the reform to the Second Punic War as a reaction to defeat by Hannibal's Spanish and Gallic cavalry.¹ Neither camp has offered a developed argument to support its proposal. Rawson's date is preferable, however, for a cavalry reform during the Second Punic War makes the best sense of all the available evidence.

Any analysis of the cavalry reform must begin with Polybius, the only authority to describe the transition:

The cavalry are now armed like that of the Greeks, but originally they had no *θώρακας* but fought in light undergarments, the result of which was that they were able to dismount and mount again at once with great dexterity and facility, but were exposed to great danger in close combat, as they were nearly naked. Their lances too were unserviceable (*ἄπρακτα*) in two respects. In the first place they made them so slender and pliant that it was impossible to take a steady aim, and before they could fix the head in anything, the shaking due to the mere motion of the horse caused most of them to break. Next as they did not fit the butt-ends

with spikes, they could only deliver the first stroke with the point and after this if they broke they were of no further service. Their buckler was made of ox-hide, somewhat similar in shape to the round bossed cakes used at sacrifices. They were not of any use for attacking, as they were not firm (σπάσι) enough; and when the leather covering peeled off and rotted owing to the rain, unserviceable (δυσχρηστοί) as they were before, they now became entirely so. Since therefore their arms did not stand the test of experience, they soon took to making them in the Greek fashion, which ensures that the first stroke of the lance-head shall be both well aimed and telling, since the lance is so constructed as to be steady and strong, and also that it may continue to be effectively used by reversing it and striking with the spike at the butt end. And the same applies to the Greek shields, which being of solid and firm texture do good service both against attack and assault. The Romans when they noticed this soon learned to copy the Greek arms; for this too is one of their virtues, that no people are so ready to adopt new fashions and imitate what they see is better in others.²

How reliable is Polybius in this matter? Without question he knew how the Roman cavalry of his own day were equipped for he had accompanied Roman armies on campaign. What of his description of the pre-reform cavalry? His account may be overly schematic; for example, he does not mention any cavalry sword for either the pre- or post-reform cavalry, yet we know the cavalry did carry swords. There is no reason to suspect that he fabricated the change in equipment out of whole cloth, however. Polybius had access to the work of earlier Roman historians such as Fabius Pictor who was a member of the Senate and must have served in the cavalry in his youth. He may also have seen paintings of lightly armed and unarmored cavalry such as the one found in the tomb on the Esquiline Hill. Finally, he had access to the body of oral and literary tradition at Rome, the personal histories of the great families. Polybius, himself, argued that he based his work in the period for which he could obtain eyewitnesses. His account of the cavalry reform's nature is most likely based upon the written and oral testimony of Romans who had seen the cavalry before and after the reform.

What of Polybius' account of the motives for the cavalry reform? Was he correct that the Roman's adopted their heavy body armor from the Greeks? We will return to this point later, but one obser-

vation should be made here. Polybius may have been mistaken in his account; certainly there are inconsistencies. Nevertheless, because he must have actually seen the Roman cavalry armor of his day, the kernel of his account must be accepted as essentially accurate. The Romans of his day wore heavy body armor just as the Greeks did. Whether the motivation to don this heavy body armor came from the Greeks will be addressed later in the chapter.³

Polybius did not date the transition to heavier armor and weaponry unfortunately, and our other authorities are completely silent on the matter. Only one date can be fixed: the monument commemorating Aemilius Paullus' victory at Pydna (168) depicts Roman cavalry in mail cuirasses.⁴ Therefore, it seems relatively certain that the Roman cavalry had adopted body armor by 168 at the latest. Can we gain any further precision?

How were the pre-reform cavalry troopers armed? Clad only in loincloths, they clearly wore no body armor. Polybius suggested this lack of armor put the Romans at great risk in close-combat. Their shields were of no use for ἐπιβολάς, or "attack," because they were not firm enough. The shields were also δύσχρηστοι, "nearly useless" –

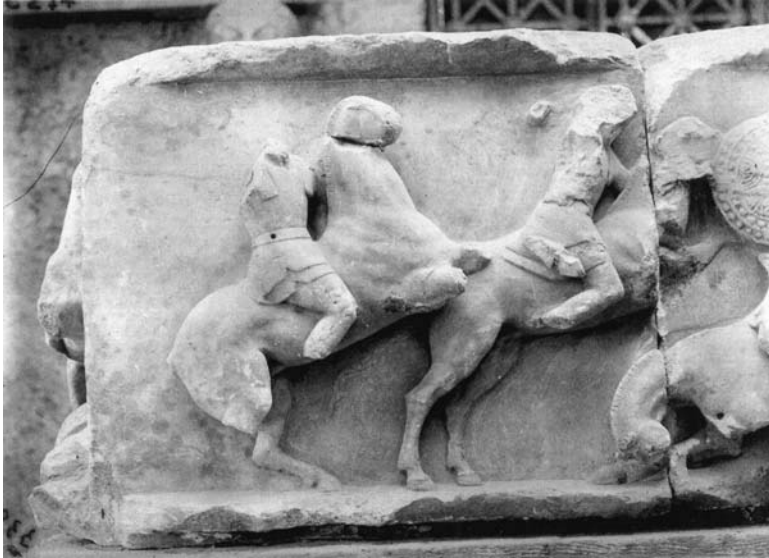


Plate 1 The monument of Aemilius Paullus at Delphi, north face. The Roman cavalry troopers are wearing cuirasses made of mail (photo École Française d'Athènes/P. Amandry).

a strong term. Polybius referred to the cavalry spear as a *δόρυ*, a term reserved for thrusting spears rather than javelins. The criticism that the spear lacked a butt-end spike for use when the head snapped in battle indicates the weapon was intended for close-combat; such a criticism would have been meaningless if the Romans did not intend to use their spears in close-combat. Polybius does not mention a sword, yet we know the cavalry troopers of the second century carried one.⁵ Perhaps the pre-reform troopers did also.⁶

The motivation for the cavalry reform, as Polybius presented it, is relatively clear. The Romans were at great risk during close-combat, and their weapons broke rather easily. Their equipment did not pass the test of experience, but Polybius was inconsistent as to what that experience was. Either the Romans recognized the inadequacy of their armament and later determined Greek-style armament to be better, or they recognized the superiority of Greek arms and the inferiority of their own at the same time.

Polybius' somewhat schematic account should be handled with some care. The poor quality of early Roman cavalry arms, for example, clearly did not stop the cavalry from seeking out close-combat. Nevertheless, his claim that the Romans adopted heavier armor because they wished to be better protected in battle is sound. We cannot forget that the advantages of body armor were not without significant cost. Armor was hot and heavy and made maneuvering on a horse extremely difficult, particularly without the aid of stirrups or saddle. Even though armor protected its wearer from harmful blows, it greatly diminished a rider's mobility and balance to an extent not often appreciated by scholars.⁷ The primary reason to adopt such equipment would be to gain greater protection from enemy blows. Even so, we cannot assume that all cavalry troopers would wholeheartedly welcome the trade-off of balance and agility for greater protection.⁸ Polybius mentioned that the lack of body armor allowed the Romans to dismount and remount their horses easily in battle. The Romans favored this tactic and must have found it considerably more difficult to execute after they adopted heavy body armor.⁹ The disadvantages of armor provide us with a key to dating the cavalry reform. When and why would the Romans have felt the advantages of protective body armor outweighed the considerable disadvantages?

Several obstacles prohibit dating the cavalry reform any earlier than the late third century. The very nature of Polybius' account offers the most immediate objection. Polybius wrote as if he or his source had first-hand knowledge about the light cavalry's spears and

shields. How else would he have known the hides covering the shields peeled off when they got wet and the spears were so slender they sometimes broke before striking the enemy? Yet, so far as we know, the Romans did not systematize their religious records until around 300, and the first historians of Rome wrote no earlier than the end of the third century. Therefore, it is extremely unlikely that anyone from the later fourth or early third century would ever have committed such a detailed description of cavalry equipment to writing. Even if someone had recorded such a description, it is incredible that such detailed information could have reached Polybius intact over a century later. The description is so circumstantial that Polybius may well have obtained it from a living eyewitness. If this was the case, the cavalry reform probably could not have taken place much earlier than *circa* 220 – the earliest date for which Polybius said he could interrogate eyewitnesses.¹⁰ Even if he did use a literary source, the earliest literary accounts of Roman history, poetic or otherwise, are no earlier than the late third century. A late fourth or even early third century date rests upon the shakiest suppositions concerning Roman record keeping and source transmission.

A fourth century or early third century date also fails the most important test, the ability to establish a motive for the cavalry reform. At that time the Romans were primarily occupied with fighting the Samnites. Our knowledge of the Samnite Wars cannot help us explain why the Romans would have thought their cavalry equipment a liability in this conflict. According to all traditions, the Samnites were renowned for their infantry, not their cavalry. The mountainous terrain of Samnium presumably would have limited the development of a strong cavalry arm.¹¹ There is no testimony of a Samnite victory over the Romans caused by cavalry. Therefore, one cannot readily explain how the Roman cavalry would have considered their arms a liability against the Samnites. Indeed, it is far from clear that Samnite cavalry was armed any better than Roman cavalry. These are all arguments from silence: at most all we can say is that no contrary evidence exists. Nevertheless, these arguments are strong. If no historical explanation of motive can be made for a fourth-century cavalry reform, we cannot prefer a fourth century date over another date that provides clearer insight into Roman motives.

The Roman encounters with Pyrrhus also suggest little motive for the reform. The Roman cavalry seems to have accounted for itself at least as well as Pyrrhus' Greek cavalry. In the first engagement

between Pyrrhus and the Romans (280), the Roman cavalry drove back the Greeks guarding the River Siris. Pyrrhus rallied his failing cavalry and charged. The Roman infantry received the enemy cavalry in good order, and for some time the issue was undecided. Ultimately, Pyrrhus' elephants made all the difference: they crowded the Roman infantry and terrified the cavalry's horses. Pyrrhus only routed the Roman cavalry troopers after his elephants had thoroughly disrupted them. He did not duplicate this limited cavalry success. At Asculum the Roman cavalry matched Pyrrhus' Greek riders. There is no reason for the Romans to have considered their cavalry arms inadequate for the tasks they had to perform in this war.¹²

A second century reform raises its own problems and must also be ruled out. Eadie suggested a second century date – probably sometime after the battle of Magnesia (189) – because the Romans repeatedly encountered Greek cavalry during this century and had ample opportunity to adopt Greek-style cavalry armament.¹³ Certainly, the Roman cavalry came to blows with heavily armored Hellenistic cavalry throughout the first half of the second century. Once the Roman cavalry decided to adopt heavier arms, encounters with heavily armed Greeks may well have reinforced this decision. Nevertheless, there is no suitable date in the early second century for the reform. If Eadie's proposal is to stand, we must place the reform between *circa* 199 and 168. Only three major wars and three periods of significant cavalry interaction occurred between Romans and Greeks during this period: the Second Macedonian War (200–196), the war against Antiochus (192–190), and the Third Macedonian War (171–168). When, during this period, would the Romans have felt inferior to armored Greek cavalry and wished to adopt heavier armament as a solution? Not during the Second Macedonian War when the Roman cavalry accounted for itself quite well.¹⁴ Eadie himself readily admitted the cavalry encounter at Magnesia (190) would not have inspired the Romans to change their cavalry equipment. During that battle the Roman cavalry scattered Antiochus' heavily armored *cataphracti* on the first charge.¹⁵

So far as we know, the Roman cavalry suffered only one substantial defeat in the period from 200 to 168. Only Perseus defeated the Roman cavalry in an encounter of any significance, at the Callinicus River in 171.¹⁶ Still, this encounter cannot have precipitated the cavalry reform. Though Perseus' reputation grew from the encounter, the engagement had been limited to cavalry and light infantry. The bulk of the Roman army had not participated in the engage-

ment, and, ultimately, the defeat was only a minor setback. Later that year the same Roman force won a minor victory over Perseus. The Romans would hardly have thought the defeat at the Callinicus significant enough to warrant adopting heavier armament, particularly when their cavalry had been largely successful for three decades against heavily armored Hellenistic cavalry. Furthermore, the Roman cavalry forces at the Callinicus consisted of a large number of auxiliary cavalry. According to Livy, the Greek auxiliary cavalry at the center of the line broke before Perseus' charge, initiating the disintegration of the Roman line. If the Romans, justly or not, blamed the Greek auxiliaries for the defeat – and according to Appian,¹⁷ the consul P. Licinius Crassus did blame the Greeks for fleeing first – there is no reason to suppose they would then have seen fit to adopt the arms of their defeated allies.¹⁸ The defeat at the Callinicus would not have inspired a cavalry reform, and there is no other event from 199 to 168 that could have done so. No plausible motive exists for a second-century cavalry reform.

Indeed, the cavalry seems to have adopted heavier arms by 200. That year the Roman cavalry fought several successful actions against the Macedonian cavalry of Philip V. Livy described the first of those actions in a passage ultimately derived from Polybius.¹⁹ Both cavalry forces were equal in numbers and fought on equal terms for hours until forced by weariness to break off the encounter. In the end the Romans reportedly suffered 35 casualties, the Macedonians 40. Later, Philip thought to inspire his soldiers by dignifying the slain Macedonian cavalymen with public funeral honors. Instead, the crowd reacted with terror, horrified by the brutal wounds the Roman cavalry swords had inflicted on the Macedonian troopers.²⁰

One might doubt the Macedonian reaction, but there are no grounds for doubting the general outline of this cavalry action. The Romans proved equal to the Macedonians on this occasion, fighting at close quarters for hours while receiving very few casualties. The pre-reform cavalry could not have fought armored Macedonian cavalry for hours on equal terms. The Roman cavalry must have already adopted its new, heavier armament by 200.

Judging by the criteria of plausible source transmission and plausible motive, we can narrow the period for the cavalry reform to between *circa* 220 and 200. The Second Punic War clearly stands out within this period as the time for the reform. The events of the Second Punic War (218–201) provided excellent motivation for the Roman cavalry to adopt heavier arms. Between 218 and 216

the Roman cavalry suffered three major defeats in as many years, more than in the whole of the previous or following century. At the Trebia River and Cannae, the cavalry's defeat enabled the Carthaginians to slaughter entire Roman armies. Polybius certainly believed that the Romans feared the Carthaginian cavalry in the years following the disaster at Cannae.²¹ This fear must have resulted from a lack of confidence in the Romans' cavalry. Rawson correctly dated the cavalry reform to this war, for the Roman fear of Hannibal's cavalry offers a strong motive for the reform. To present a strong case for a cavalry reform during the Second Punic War, however, it is necessary to examine the cavalry's role in this war.

The Roman cavalry had been very successful in the years immediately before the Second Punic War. During the Gallic War of the 220s, the Roman cavalry performed extremely well, defeating Gallic cavalry and infantry, and contributing significantly to the overall Roman success in northern Italy. At the battle of the Telamon (225), the Romans fought a large cavalry engagement against the Gauls. The two forces sought to occupy a hilltop along the flank of the two armies; the Romans eventually prevailed. The Roman cavalry then charged the Gallic infantry at the bottom of the hill, killing many of them and forcing the rest to flee.²² In 222 the consul M. Claudius Marcellus led the cavalry to another impressive victory over the Gauls. Marcellus and his colleague Cornelius Scipio were laying siege to Acerrae. Learning that a force of Gauls was besieging Clastidium, Marcellus took the cavalry from both consular armies and a small body of infantry and set out to relieve the town. When the Gauls saw the approaching Roman force, they drew up in battle-order. The Roman cavalry charged unaided by infantry, struck the Gallic infantry in the flank and the rear, and dispersed the Gauls.²³ Marcellus earned the rare honor of the *spolia opima* by slaying the Gallic leader Britomartus in combat.²⁴ The Gallic wars produced two significant cavalry victories and the cavalry hero Marcellus. There was no reason for Roman cavalrymen to fear they were inadequately equipped – certainly not to such an extent that they would readily accept the disadvantages of heavy armor.

When the Roman troopers first encountered Hannibal's horsemen, they performed well, driving off the enemy and successfully completing their reconnaissance mission.²⁵ At the cavalry-battle of the Ticinus (218), however, the Romans suffered a solid defeat. Hannibal placed his sturdiest cavalry²⁶ in the front of his battle line and the Numidians on the flanks. Scipio placed his Gallic

cavalry in front and the rest of his cavalry in the rear. When the battle began the Roman light infantry was forced back and had to retreat through the gaps in the cavalry. The two cavalry formations then engaged front-to-front. The battle remained evenly matched for a time until the Numidian cavalry circled the Roman force and attacked from the rear, dispersing the Roman forces.²⁷

According to Polybius, there was much surprise when news of the unexpected defeat reached Rome. The Romans devised a variety of explanations.²⁸ After such great successes against the Gauls and victory in their first cavalry encounter with the Carthaginians, the Romans surely did not expect their cavalry to lose at the Ticinus River. Still, this one defeat would not have made the Romans lose confidence in their cavalry; with Scipio and Sempronius' armies still intact, the setback was minor.

Roman and Hannibalic cavalry met next at the Trebia River. The Roman cavalry and light infantry successfully checked the Celtic and Numidian cavalry raiding the countryside, but Carthaginian reinforcements forced the Romans back. The consul, Ti. Sempronius Longus, responded by sending the remainder of his cavalry and light infantry into the conflict. Hannibal refused to commit to a pitched battle, however, and the Romans won the day, inflicting greater losses on the enemy than they received. Polybius asserted Sempronius was confident from his cavalry's success.²⁹

The next day Hannibal's Numidian cavalry attempted to draw out the Romans before the latter had eaten breakfast. Sempronius took the bait. He sent out the cavalry then followed with the rest of the army. The Romans crossed the Trebia in wintertime when the river was swollen from rainfall and, no doubt, very cold. After fording the river the Romans were hungry, wet, cold, and exhausted. Early in the battle the fresh and larger Carthaginian cavalry force easily stripped the Romano-Italian cavalry from the infantry's flanks. Once Hannibal's cavalry drove off the Roman troopers, Carthaginian infantry attacked the exposed Roman flanks. Finally, the Carthaginian reserve appeared from its ambush and hit the Roman rear. The Roman infantry crumbled under the pressure and routed.³⁰

Hannibal's cavalry had defeated the Roman cavalry again. This time the defeat was more severe. At the Ticinus the results of failure had been limited to the Roman cavalry and light infantry. Now the cavalry's failure had left the Roman infantry's flanks exposed to attack, an important factor in the Roman defeat. It appears, however, that the Romans did not yet question seriously the cavalry's effec-

tiveness. Polybius and Livy blamed the defeat on Sempronius' great ambition, a verdict perhaps shared by the consul's contemporaries. Surely, a number of Romans attributed the defeat to the Carthaginian ambush. Still, if the Romans did not blame the cavalry directly, it was clear the cavalry had not performed well.

The battle at Cannae (216) was, without doubt, the low watermark for the Roman cavalry. The citizen cavalry suffered extreme casualties and its failure to hold the Roman right-flank played a decisive part in the Roman defeat; no longer could any Roman plausibly deny that the cavalry was not doing its job. Hannibal's infantry numbered perhaps 40,000. Considerable debate exists, however, concerning the number of Roman legions fielded that day.³¹ Polybius explicitly stated the Romans had eight legions of 5,000 Romans at Cannae and the allied contingents brought the total number up to 80,000.³² Livy, on the other hand, noted two conflicting traditions concerning the Roman army's size at Cannae. One suggested that the two consular armies – each consisting of two legions and an equal number of allied infantry – were supplemented with an additional 10,000 troops for a total of 50,000–55,000 infantry. The other tradition reckons the Roman force at eight legions, as Polybius insisted.³³ This debate is important for us only in that it may change the rough order of magnitude of the citizen and allied cavalry contingents that day. If the Romans had attached 300 citizen cavalry to each legion, which is likely,³⁴ the citizen contingent at Cannae would have roughly numbered either 1,200 or 2,400 depending on whether the Romans had four or eight legions. A few considerations are worth noting. The figure of 1,200 is very low. The total cavalry force of the Romans at Cannae numbered 6,000. If we prefer the lower figure of 1,200 citizen cavalry, then the allies supplied 4,800 cavalry. This is a citizen–ally ratio of 1:4, and, to my knowledge, neither Polybius nor Livy ever recorded so high a proportion of allied cavalry.³⁵ Rejecting this ratio is not a matter of following a formula so much as considering the normal military burdens placed upon the allies. Rejecting a citizen cavalry contingent of 1,200, however, does not require us to assume the citizen cavalry numbered 2,400; it is possible that the figure did not strictly match the formula. In any event, the number of citizen cavalry was not likely to have been more than 2,400: again, there was little precedent for so large a citizen cavalry contingent – over 300 per legion. The citizen cavalry probably numbered between 1,200 and 2,400 and the Italian allied cavalry between 3,600 and 4,800.

Both Polybius and Livy agreed that the Carthaginian cavalry numbered about 10,000 and these consisted primarily of Spanish, Gallic, and Numidian cavalry.³⁶ The Spanish and Numidian contingents together must have numbered roughly 6,000; when Hannibal entered Italy he had 6,000 cavalry and had not yet acquired any Gallic cavalry. Therefore, the remaining 4,000 cavalry, acquired after Hannibal entered Italy, must have been Gallic.³⁷ At Cannae Hannibal divided his cavalry into a Spanish and Gallic force and a Numidian force. The Spanish and Gallic force must have numbered considerably more than 4,000 and the Numidians considerably fewer than 6,000.³⁸

On the day of battle, the citizen cavalry deployed on the right wing next to the river, and the Italian allied cavalry deployed on the left wing. The Spanish and Gallic cavalry deployed opposite the citizen cavalry while the Numidian cavalry faced the Italian allies.³⁹ Because the Spanish and Gallic contingent numbered significantly more than 4,000, they outnumbered the citizen troopers on the right flank by at least 2:1 and, perhaps, by considerably more.⁴⁰

The key to the cavalry battle at Cannae was the restricted space in which the Roman cavalry on the right wing operated. On their left stood the heavy infantry, packed in an unusually close and deep formation. On their right was the river, and they deployed close to it.⁴¹ After several major defeats the Roman cavalry probably adopted a defensive posture. Their primary task was to guard the flank of their army rather than to assault the enemy flank. Hannibal's significantly larger cavalry force also probably forced the cavalry along the river to focus on defense. The right wing was important enough for the consul Aemilius to command it.

When the citizen troopers met the Spanish and Gallic force, they dismounted and fought on foot in a particularly brutal encounter. Polybius thought this instance of dismounting in battle to have been contrary to regular cavalry practice (*κατὰ νόμους*). As we will see, this is not entirely true. The citizen cavalry not uncommonly fought on foot. Strikingly, however, there is no other clear example of them doing so during a pitched battle. Polybius was aware of the Roman proclivity toward fighting dismounted. Perhaps he considered this tactic contrary to regular practice because it occurred during a pitched battle. Indeed, centuries later, Plutarch was so confused by Romans dismounting at Cannae that he offered a contrived explanation for the tactic.⁴²

Several factors must have driven the citizen troopers to fight dismounted at Cannae. First, if the citizen cavalry was to defend the

right flank, as its deployment suggests, it had to remain close to the flank and, therefore, was limited in its maneuverability. There was little or no room to maneuver anyway because the cavalry forces on both sides were packed in between the infantry and the river. Livy's account of the fighting suggests this. The cavalry forces closest to the river had no room to perform an outflanking maneuver and so could only charge. Packed in a tight space, the riders on each side began to dismount or pull one another from their horses.⁴³ Polybius referred to the fighting as barbaric, and it is likely he envisioned the skirmish in terms similar to those of Livy. The citizen cavalry had no room to maneuver and needed to hold the right flank at all costs. Determined, they dismounted from their horses and held their ground as best they could against a much larger cavalry force.

Ultimately, their efforts were in vain. Hasdrubal's Spanish and Gallic cavalry drove the Romans back along the river and cut them down mercilessly.⁴⁴ Hasdrubal then led his troopers behind the Roman infantry and attacked the Italian allied cavalry, already engaged with the Numidians, from the rear. Once the allied cavalry scattered in flight, Hasdrubal turned his forces again and hit the rear ranks of the Roman infantry. Meanwhile, the Roman infantry had driven back the center of the Carthaginian line, but now found itself enveloped by the Carthaginian wings. The combination of the infantry envelopment and the attack of the Carthaginian cavalry from behind thoroughly demoralized the Roman infantry. The Carthaginians hemmed the Romans in on all sides and slaughtered them.⁴⁵ Polybius' account of the battle indicates that the failure of the citizen and allied cavalry to protect the flanks of the infantry was a major factor in the defeat of the Roman army.

Rawson suggested the citizen cavalry wing was slaughtered at Cannae because its light cavalry equipment was inadequate. The greater number of Carthaginian cavalry played some part in the victory, but this was not the whole story. The Spanish and Gallic cavalry killed a staggering number of citizen riders. Yet nothing of this sort happened to the allied cavalry on the other flank, which must also have engaged a larger force of Numidian cavalry. The Numidian cavalry, however, was apparently very lightly armed.⁴⁶ Furthermore, on previous occasions the Roman and Numidian cavalry had been fairly evenly matched. Rawson suggested this discrepancy in performance could easily be explained if the Roman cavalry was still equipped as light cavalry as late as Cannae.⁴⁷

Rawson's hypothesis has merit but must be explored in some detail. First, let us consider the evidence for the armament of the

Spanish and Gallic cavalry under Hannibal. Before the battle of the Ticinus (218), according to Polybius, "Hannibal, putting his bridled cavalry, and *all the heavier part of it* in front, led them to meet the enemy, having his Numidian horse ready on each wing to execute an outflanking maneuver."⁴⁸ The key word here is *τὸ στάσιμον*, which generally has the meaning of "sturdy" or, perhaps, "steadfast," and is a subgroup of Hannibal's bridled cavalry, the Spanish horse. This is a rare, if not unique, instance in Greek literature where *στάσιμος* seems to mean "heavy" cavalry, that is shock cavalry.⁴⁹ Since Polybius contrasted the "sturdier" part of the bridled cavalry with the Numidians, all we can infer is that Hannibal possessed cavalry that was sturdier than the Numidians. Polybius, in any event, would not have called the Numidians *στάσιμους*. The Numidians were very lightly armed and had a peculiar style of fighting, darting about the battlefield, scattering and retreating, and then wheeling to attack with great daring.⁵⁰ At the battle of Cannae, according to Polybius, the Numidians neither inflicted nor received much damage because of their fighting-style.⁵¹ In contrast to this extremely fluid and mobile cavalry, Polybius might well consider the Spanish shock cavalry to have been "steady" or "sturdy". His terminology, nevertheless, provides no specific information concerning Spanish cavalry arms.⁵²

The archaeological evidence only illustrates the great variation possible in Spanish armament.⁵³ Some figurines and vase paintings depict Spanish riders in circular pectorals and even scale armor, but armor appears to have been exceptional among the Spanish. Normally, Spanish warriors wore short linen or goat-wool tunics like the one described by Polybius.⁵⁴ Connolly's reconstruction of Spanish cavalry likewise suggests they wore only a tunic.⁵⁵ Only the wealthiest riders would have worn body armor.

Even those riders without body armor, however, had some protective equipment and bore sturdy weaponry. Spanish cavalry, regardless of other variations in equipment, generally carried the *caetra*, some form of helmet, and either the *falcata*, a spear, or both. The *caetra* was a small round shield with a sturdy central iron boss and may well have been useful as an offensive weapon. The *falcata* was a saber with a heavy curving blade equally capable of delivering a chopping blow or a sharp thrust. The evidence for Spanish spears suggests they had strong heads reinforced by a central rib and butt-spikes.⁵⁶ The Gallic cavalry seems to have been similarly well armed. Some Gallic cavalry, no doubt the most wealthy, wore mail shirts. Most seem to have had sturdy round

shields, helmets and spears.⁵⁷ Both the Spanish and Gallic cavalry at Cannae must have been relatively well equipped for close combat, and those who wore body armor were very well equipped.

If the citizen cavalry had already adopted body armor, strong shields, and spears, besides their swords, they would have had better arms and armor than most of the Spanish and Gallic cavalry. If not, they wore loincloths, carried weak shields, and wielded spears that were likely to shatter on the first blow. If they had swords at Cannae, they would have had to close even further with their opponents and defend themselves only with a shield that was of little use in assaults. Which alternative is more plausible when we consider the outcome of the cavalry encounter? The key factor, again, was the cramped space in which the citizen cavalry fought at Cannae. The lightly armed Romans could dismount and remount their horses dexterously in battle. Furthermore, the Roman rider without armor was quicker and more agile than he would have been with armor. But the cramped conditions of the cavalry skirmish at Cannae greatly diminished the advantage of fighting without armor. The killing zone of the enemy cavalry force was limited by weapon length, and the restricted space would have diminished, somewhat, the numerical advantage of the Carthaginian cavalry. If the citizen cavalry troopers wore body armor and bore sturdy shields and spears, they would have been armed as the first-class infantry were. We may suppose, under these circumstances, they would have held up reasonably well even if they eventually lost. If, on the other hand, they still fought in loincloths, protected only by the flimsiest of shields and wielding brittle spears, their defeat is unsurprising. The lightly-armed citizen troopers would have found themselves at a severe disadvantage when pressed close against the enemy with little room to maneuver.⁵⁸ We might well expect the citizen cavalry to have suffered a disastrous defeat.

The results of this cavalry engagement suggest Roman cavalry troopers were still lightly armed. They suffered extremely high casualties as the Spanish and Gallic cavalry drove them along the river. The casualty figures are notoriously problematic, but, by any figure, the citizen cavalry suffered well over 1,000 casualties and may have suffered near-complete destruction, while the Spanish and Gallic cavalry suffered comparatively minor casualties.⁵⁹ This is a great discrepancy in casualties when we consider that the Roman cavalry apparently did not turn to flee but died in the actual *mêlée*. We cannot prove the Roman cavalry at Cannae was lightly armed; nevertheless it is likely, given what we know

about the battle at Cannae and the arms of the Spanish and Gallic cavalry. Otherwise we must explain why a heavily-armed Roman cavalry force met with destruction. This task, while not impossible, would be more difficult.

If the Roman cavalry at Cannae was lightly armed, a motive for the reform becomes very clear. The Roman cavalrymen who survived knew first-hand how poorly their weaponry had served in the severe close-combat conditions at Cannae. Those who had served in the cavalry at Cannae would have had good reason to feel intimidated by Hannibal's cavalry and to doubt the efficacy of their own equipment. Even worse, the failure of the Roman cavalry allowed the Spanish and Gallic cavalry to strike the Roman infantry in the rear, thereby encouraging the Carthaginian forces and demoralizing the Roman infantry. It was at this point that the Roman forces utterly disintegrated.⁶⁰ The Romans must have recognized that cavalry played a key role in this battle. The slaughter of many young members of the elite – not to mention the eighty distinguished volunteers who were either senators or eligible for the Senate⁶¹ – left little doubt that, somehow, the Roman cavalry had been found wanting.

We can be fairly certain that the disaster at Cannae posed a crisis for the Roman cavalry. When Polybius looked back, he thought the Romans felt they owed their defeats – and the Carthaginians their victories – to the Carthaginian cavalry.⁶² The Roman strategy immediately following Cannae suggests the Romans lacked confidence in their cavalry and feared the Carthaginian horse. The Romans remained on high ground to protect themselves from enemy cavalry and simply shadowed Hannibal's movements.⁶³ The Romans must have felt their cavalry was unable to counter the Carthaginians. Otherwise, why the fear?

The defection of Capua after Cannae further exacerbated the Roman cavalry's crisis. The Campanian *equites* had possessed Roman citizenship since the late fourth century and were known for their abilities as mounted warriors.⁶⁴ Their defection from Rome weakened an already demoralized Roman cavalry. During the siege of Capua (216–211), the Romans suffered a number of demoralizing encounters with Carthaginian and Campanian cavalry. When Hannibal attempted to relieve Capua, the Roman army remained within its fortifications and destroyed all the fodder in the region.⁶⁵ Meanwhile, the Campanian cavalry harassed the Roman besiegers with some success, regularly winning small skirmishes against the Roman cavalry.⁶⁶ Livy must have been correct to assert that these defeats demoralized the Romans.⁶⁷

Livy wrote of two Roman cavalymen during these years who defeated Campanian opponents in single combat. These accounts are important because they preserve the Roman need for moral victories at this time and are emphasized precisely because they ran counter to the general pattern of Campanian victories. The Roman heroes proved that the enemy cavalry would not always be victorious. In the first duel Cerrinus Vibellius Taurea, the finest of all the Campanian horsemen, challenged Claudius Asellus, his former comrade and the finest of all the Roman horsemen. The two riders wheeled and dodged one another for a time without landing a blow. At last, Taurea challenged his opponent to jump into a narrow ditch nearby where there would be no room for evasion. Claudius accepted the challenge without hesitation, but Taurea balked and returned to his ranks.⁶⁸ The second duel happened several years later. A recently successful sortie by Campanian and Carthaginian cavalry had damaged Roman morale. T. Quinctius Crispinus restored Roman morale by defeating the Campanian Badius in a cavalry duel. The two had been guest-friends, but Badius renounced his ties and challenged Crispinus to battle. Crispinus transfixed his spear in Badius' shoulder, but Badius fled and avoided his deathblow. Crispinus returned to the Roman camp with the arms and horse of his foe and received praise and rewards from both consuls.⁶⁹

The year 211 seems to have been the beginning of a turning-point for the Roman cavalry as Livy's account of the creation of the *velites* in 211 suggests. According to Livy, the quickest of the light infantry armed themselves with small shields and seven javelins. Each cavalry trooper transported one of these soldiers to within missile range of the enemy. The light infantry dismounted and charged while casting their javelins in quick succession against the enemy soldiers and horses. The cavalry followed up with a charge and pursued the fleeing Capuans to the city gates.⁷⁰ Livy incorrectly believed that the Romans first used *velites* at this time; actually, light infantry had accompanied the legions well before 211.⁷¹ Nevertheless, there is no compelling reason to doubt that the Romans were combining light infantry and cavalry in this manner at this time. This passage suggests the Romans were attempting to develop innovative tactics to help their cavalry overcome the opposing cavalry. Livy asserted this tactic ended the dominance of the Campanian cavalry. Certainly, the Romans had reduced Capua by 211, and the Campanian horse no longer posed a problem.

Numismatic evidence also suggests that a transition occurred around the year 211. In that year the Romans began to mint silver *denarii* for the first time. Before 211, the demands of the early years of the war had caused Roman *aes grave* to diminish in weight and fineness. The silver denarius reflected restored confidence and resources. This new coinage was partially a product of the great wealth Marcellus acquired by sacking Syracuse (211).⁷² What is particularly striking, however, is the design on these *denarii*: the reverse depicts the Dioscurii riding on horseback, clad in Greek armor, and charging with leveled spears.⁷³ The Dioscurii had had symbolic ties with the Roman *equites* for centuries and, according to tradition, had personally fought for the Romans at the battle of Lake Regillus (494). The Roman *equites* held their annual parade on the anniversary of that battle.⁷⁴ The aristocracy was well aware of the close symbolic ties between the Dioscurii and cavalry service. The use of the Dioscurii as an icon at this point in time probably reflected the cavalry's renewed confidence. The adoption of heavy cavalry armament may have helped renew that confidence. Perhaps this is why the Dioscurii wear armor on these coins.

Polybius also testified to the cavalry's renewed confidence and effectiveness.⁷⁵ In 206 Scipio reportedly had confidence in his cavalry when he prepared to fight the Spanish chieftain Andobales. His confidence was not misplaced. During the battle C. Laelius and the Roman cavalry neutralized the Spanish cavalry by attacking it from the rear and keeping it on the defensive throughout the battle.⁷⁶ The Roman cavalry continued to fight effectively against the Carthaginians and their allies. At Campi Magni the Roman cavalry defeated the Numidians with ease.⁷⁷ This in itself is,



Plate 2 An early Roman denarius depicting the Dioscurii as charging horsemen (photo © copyright The British Museum).

perhaps, not particularly significant, for the Numidian cavalry was lightly armed. At Zama, however, Laelius and the Roman horse deployed on the left wing against the Carthaginian heavy cavalry while Masinissa and his Numidians on the right opposed Hannibal's Numidians. The Roman cavalry drove off the Carthaginian cavalry, then joined Masinissa's Numidian allies to strike the Carthaginian infantry from behind, routing them.⁷⁸

The Second Punic War provided excellent motive for adopting heavier armament, and the pattern of great failures, demoralization, a subsequent rise in confidence, and then success is consistent with such a change in armament. Now we must consider again Polybius' description of the cavalry reform, particularly his contention that the Roman cavalry adopted Greek-style armament as part of the reform. At least two possible solutions exist. First, we could accept Polybius at face value and look for a direct Greek source of transmission. We know that Greek-style arms had existed in Italy for centuries,⁷⁹ and, surely, the Romans were aware of them. What they lacked before this point was any sufficiently compelling reason to adopt the heavier Greek equipment and its accompanying disadvantages. Fully aware of heavier Greek armament, the Romans chose to adopt the heavier armament during the middle years of the Second Punic War.

If it is necessary to suppose the Romans adopted Greek-style armament after observing contemporary Greeks, the Aetolians were the obvious Greeks to observe. The Romans had sent an embassy to the Aetolians in 228 and were actively aware of them from at least that point.⁸⁰ Polybius and Livy clearly asserted that Aetolian cavalry was the finest in Greece, and this provides us with a possible reason for the Romans to perceive Greek cavalry armament to be superior to their own.⁸¹ Here, then, is a possible avenue for the transmission of Greek cavalry armament.

It is possible, however, that the primary influence, *pace* Polybius, was not even directly Greek. Polybius asserted that Roman armor was like Greek armor. All he gave for comparison, however, was the sturdiness of the equipment. Rome had encountered other cavalry forces with weapons similar to those of the Greeks. The Spanish spear, for example, was very similar to the Greek version, having a strong head and butt-spike. Likewise, the Spanish cavalry shield was very similar to the Greek cavalry shield in that both were small, round, and sturdy.⁸² As for body armor, perhaps the cavalry troopers simply took to wearing mail cuirasses just as the wealthiest Roman infantrymen did – certainly they wear mail cuirasses on the monu-

ment to Aemilius Paullus.⁸³ Polybius would have been essentially correct to say that Roman cavalry wearing a Roman infantry cuirass and carrying a Spanish-style shield and spear were armed like the Greeks.

It cannot be proven that the Roman cavalry adopted heavier armament during the middle years of the Second Punic War. The evidence, nevertheless, points strongly toward this period. Substantial reasons exist, also, for ruling out both a second century reform and a fourth century reform: neither period offers a plausible motive for the Romans to have adopted body armor and sturdier weaponry. More importantly, the events of the Second Punic War fit extremely well with Polybius' description of the cavalry reform. The Romans clearly had lost confidence in their cavalry after Cannae and with good reason. The Roman fear of the Carthaginian cavalry was so great that the Romans chose to remain in the hills or, when forced to camp in the plains, to destroy all the surrounding horse fodder. The consistent victories of the Campanian cavalry in skirmishes only compounded the Romans' fear. Yet by 211, according to Livy and the evidence of the silver *denarii*, the cavalry had regained some or all of their self-confidence; Scipio at least had full confidence in their abilities. In the later years of the war, the Roman cavalry performed well against Spanish, Carthaginian, and Numidian cavalry. The Second Punic War also offers a satisfactory solution to the crucial problem of when and why the Roman cavalry would have chosen to sacrifice flexibility and maneuverability in return for greater protection.

The Second Punic War is the best possible period to locate the Roman cavalry reform. Neither before nor after this period did the Roman cavalry experience any series of defeats that would have motivated them to adopt heavier equipment. In the war against Hannibal, however, the Roman cavalry experienced several major defeats in a short time. Furthermore, the battle conditions at Cannae, so far as we can tell, would have made the Roman's lack of cavalry equipment seem a particular liability. A reform in equipment at this time explains quite well the Roman cavalry's turnabout from disaster and demoralization to self-confidence and effective performance, and there is no better period to locate the reform.⁸⁴

It is time to consider the reformed cavalry's equipment and that equipment's effects on a rider's performance. The reformed Roman cavalry bore sturdier shields and wore body armor. Polybius referred

to the latter as a *θώραξ*, or cuirass. Walbank suggested this may have been the mail shirt first-class infantry wore since Polybius used the same term for their armor.⁸⁵ Actually, Polybius said the first class of infantry wore *ἀλυσιδωτούς . . . θώρακας*, “breastplates wrought in chain,” whereas for the cavalry he simply used the term *θώρακας*. Perhaps the cavalry cuirass was linen or metal like the Hellenistic cuirass, not mail. On the other hand, it is reasonable to suppose the cavalry simply adopted the mail armor then current among the wealthiest members of the infantry. Of course, we should not expect standardization of equipment in this period and the type of the *θώραξ* may have differed from individual to individual. Perhaps some chose not to wear it at all. What is ultimately important is the protection that a mail or metal cuirass provided the rider against cutting blows and, to a lesser degree, against thrusts.

The evidence for a Roman cavalry helmet during the Republic is scanty. Unfortunately, the Roman cavalrymen’s heads are missing on the monument of Aemilius Paullus. The altar of Domitius Ahenobarbus, which may depict a late second century census, portrays a rider in mail armor with a helmet.⁸⁶ The rider is almost certainly a Roman since the altar depicts a Roman census. This suggests cavalry troopers in the late Republic wore helmets, and it is likely that they did so in the middle Republic. The tomb painting on the Esquiline Hill also depicts a lightly armed Roman trooper with a helmet.⁸⁷ Historians have dated this painting alternatively to the early third century and the late second century. If the painting belongs to the earlier period, it depicts a contemporary citizen cavalry trooper and indicates that the pre-reform cavalry wore helmets. In this case it is reasonable to assume that the cavalry continued to wear helmets when they opted to wear body armor. On the other hand, if the rider in the tomb painting lived during the second half of the second century – and the evidence is far from conclusive – it is an anachronistic depiction of the cavalry. Even if this were true, the painter thought it fitting to depict the rider with a helmet, perhaps indicating the cavalry of the painter’s day wore helmets.

Protected by a cuirass, shield, and helmet, the Roman cavalryman was equipped as well as the first class of infantry and well protected even in close combat. This protection gave the rider a greater sense of security in battle. There was a significant cost to this protection, however. Armor was heavy and encumbering and made maneuvering on a horse very difficult.⁸⁸ Some historians have noted the instability of fighting without stirrups, but few

have fully appreciated the instability caused simply by wearing heavy armor and equipment. Ann Hyland, an experienced equestrian, vividly described the difficulty armor posed to a Roman cavalry rider during the Empire. Except for a few instances where equipment differed, her insights are equally valid for the rider of the middle Republic:

The Roman cavalryman had to reach a level of expertise never demanded of modern riders. He may have lacked the finesse of today's top experts, but he had to be a fighting machine working in concert with an animal responsive to his slightest movement. Horses are put off balance very easily and lose smoothness of performance when a rider is not in concert with them. The wearing of heavy armor, and manipulating weapon and shield, is very unbalancing to the man, and by extension the horse.⁸⁹

Hyland donned reconstruction armor and conducted riding trials using Roman riding tack on her horse. Although an experienced rider, on more than one occasion Hyland felt close to losing her seat. She also noted the loss of rein control caused by the Roman equipment. The use of a shield meant the rider lost a great deal of subtlety in control as well as losing the directional use of the left rein. Hyland's experiments led her to assert that the rider would have had to substitute for the left rein by applying pressure to the horse's neck with his shield.⁹⁰ Granted, the cavalry shield of the empire was larger, but we may expect that the smaller *parma* equally limited the rider's use of the reins with his shield-hand. Meanwhile, the rider's other hand was occupied with a spear.

Hyland conducted these experiments using a reconstructed military saddle from the Empire. These saddles were short with front and rear horns that curved over the rider's thighs and locked him into the saddle. There is no credible evidence that the Roman cavalryman of the Republic ever used a saddle at all and certainly not the sophisticated military saddle of the Empire. The saddle was likely a Celtic invention and appeared for the first time on Roman sculptures of the early Empire. The monument to Aemilius Paullus depicts the Roman riders riding bareback. The altar of Domitius Ahenobarbus also depicts the Roman trooper's horse without a saddle.⁹¹ Taken together, this evidence suggests the Roman rider at most enjoyed the limited stability afforded by a saddle cloth.⁹²

The lack of a saddle made the Roman rider's seat even more precarious:

To ride bareback, or almost so, at a full gallop in a straight line is relatively easy for a *good* horseman. Such a horseman would also be able to cope with turns, circles, levades, rears, horses striking with forefeet, and so on, if such movements were dictated by the rider and at moderate speed. The picture changes once that same rider is armed and armoured. The extra weight of the armour, particularly that carried by the torso, has a very unseating and unbalancing effect on a rider whose upper body movement is energetic, as would be the case when employing weapons whose use would be dictated by need, not by rider choice . . . Battle dictates the need for quick turns, levades, sudden stops, and equally sudden spurts, quarter and half turns. The rider loses the benefit of choosing the tempo and thus cannot brace himself against sudden unseating movements. Without a firm saddle offering definite support in all phases of movement by both horse and rider, the effective use of the horse was greatly reduced.⁹³

One final note should be made about the difficulty of fighting in armor. The reconstructed mail shirt Hyland wore weighed 30 pounds, and it is reasonable to suppose the mail cuirass of the republic weighed a similar amount. She wore the shirt loose, on the hypothesis that a rider would need the freedom of movement afforded by looser-fitting armor. When Hyland rode at a canter, the shirt banged on her shoulders and inflicted deep bruises. Hyland proposed one would have had to wear a padded tunic to prevent injury.⁹⁴ The monument to Aemilius Paulus depicts the Roman riders with a tunic under their cuirass. Perhaps the tunic had pads to lessen the impact of armor. With padding the armor would fit more snugly, be more restrictive, and further reduce the rider's flexibility.

The weight of armor, the limited rein control, and the rapid movements of the horse combined to make the Roman rider's seat quite precarious. Clearly, those cavalry troopers who did adopt heavier armament must have learned to cope. But given the difficulties presented by the extra weight of body armor, we may rightly question whether all riders opted to wear the cumbersome stuff. There was a time when the wealthiest Romans, as well as other

Italians, preferred to fight without body armor. Clearly, affordability and access were not the only considerations involved in choosing whether to wear armor. Soldiers throughout history at times have refrained from wearing protective equipment because of the discomfort such equipment caused.⁹⁵ Pride and prestige may also have factored into the equation. The Roman value-system lauded those men who exposed themselves to danger and received wounds in the service of the Republic. We will consider later the role of the Roman value-system in motivating the cavalry. For now it is enough to note that the Romans seem to have honored especially those who bore battle-scars, the concrete evidence of the ability to take a hit and keep fighting. It may have been a matter of bravado for an elite youth to expose himself to greater risk of injury by disdaining the use of protective body armor.⁹⁶ Perhaps individuals could equip themselves roughly as they wished so long as they did not shirk their military responsibilities and their equipment did not overtly hamper their performance.

For offensive weapons the Roman rider carried both spear and sword. The exact style of the cavalry sword and the time when the Romans adopted it are something of a mystery. According to Livy, the cavalry carried a *gladius Hispaniensis* by 200, a sword that could apparently deliver devastating cutting blows.⁹⁷ Polybius did not mention this sword as part of the equipment for either pre- or post-reform cavalry. Dionysius of Halicarnassus referred to fifth century Roman cavalry carrying this sword,⁹⁸ and perhaps the Roman cavalry had always carried a sword as a reserve weapon. In any event, the heavy cavalry of the second century had a sword as well as a spear.

What exactly was the *gladius Hispaniensis*? Two types of swords existed concurrently in Spain. The less common sword was short and straight with a sharp point. The Spanish *falcata* was by far the more common weapon. It was a short, broad, curving sword very similar to, and probably deriving from, the Greek *machaira* but with an excellent thrusting point and cutting edge.⁹⁹ Curved cutting swords very similar to the *falcata* had been known in Italy for centuries,¹⁰⁰ and there is no reason why the Roman cavalry might not have used this type of sword. Spence noted that the Greek *machaira* was likely very effective for Greek cavalry, particularly when used to strike the heads of infantry soldiers. Its curved blade was relatively heavy at the point of impact and could deliver a hefty cutting blow.¹⁰¹

For the rider on horseback, however, the sturdy thrusting spear was the primary weapon. The greater reach of the spear made it far more useful to a rider than a sword, particularly since the rider

fought from an elevated position removed from his opponent. With a sword the rider had to move very close to attack his target, opening his horse and himself to attack in return. The longer reach of the spear allowed a rider to attack enemies bearing shorter weapons with less risk to himself.

The Roman post-reform cavalry rider was well equipped for close combat. It is doubtful the Romans normally carried missile weapons. Polybius did not mention missile weapons in 6.25, but neither did he mention swords. Polybius referred to the spear as a *δόρυ*, a term used for thrusting spears, and the reference to a butt-spike for a second blow would be nonsensical if the weapon was solely intended to be thrown. There are only two instances, separated by some 70 years, when Romano-Italian cavalry might have employed missile weapons. At the battle of Ilipa, according to Polybius, the cavalry and light infantry drew the Carthaginian army out of camp with missile weapons and harmed the Carthaginian elephants with javelins. Appian asserted the cavalry used javelins to distract and draw off a force of Numantian infantry in 134.¹⁰² It is quite possible, however, that these were auxiliary cavalry forces and not Romano-Italian.¹⁰³

Probably, the Roman cavalry normally only carried close-combat weapons, and when Livy described the combined attacks of cavalry and *velites* at Capua, only the *velites* carried missile weapons. It was the cavalry's task to drive off the enemy with a charge or to close with them.¹⁰⁴ Livy also described a cavalry engagement with the Macedonians where the *velites* hurled their spears before engaging and the Roman cavalry fought on horseback or on foot.¹⁰⁵ Again, only the *velites* carried javelins while the cavalry, seemingly, had only close-combat weapons. Since it was common for light infantry to accompany Roman cavalry on skirmishing missions,¹⁰⁶ the cavalry probably left the task of casting missiles to their pedestrian comrades. The issue may be moot. As we shall see in the following chapter, the Roman cavalry did not, as a rule, regularly make use of attacks from a distance but preferred to engage in close combat.

Did the Italian cavalry serve with similar equipment? We have no conclusive evidence, but it is likely. The same evidence for missile weapons holds for the Italian cavalry and, likewise, there is no reason to suspect that the Italians regularly used javelins. Without missile weapons the allied cavalry had to fight at close-quarters just as the Roman cavalry. More telling evidence may come from Livy. In battle against the Gauls, Marcellus ordered the allied cavalry to

charge the Gauls.¹⁰⁷ This suggests that the allied cavalry was armored. Otherwise, one would not expect the allies to spearhead a cavalry charge. If the charge did not disperse the infantry, the allied cavalry would have to fight at close-quarters and, without armor, would be far more vulnerable than the heavy citizen cavalry. On the other hand, the Roman cavalry had served as shock cavalry even when lightly armed. I can only suggest the allies took advantage of the same range of equipment available to the Romans. The Italian allies were present during the great cavalry defeats of the Second Punic War and may have decided to adopt heavier armament – or perhaps were commanded to do so. No evidence suggests the Italian cavalry was armed differently than the Romans, nor is there any evidence that the combat duties assigned to each group differed. It is likely, though not certain, the allied cavalry possessed the same equipment as the Roman cavalry.

An important factor in the combat potential of any ancient cavalry force was its equipment. Strong weapons and protective armor provided a greater sense of security than lighter equipment. At the same time the extra weight of protective armor drastically reduced the mobility and agility of the rider. This was particularly important for the Roman rider, whose skirmishing tactics included dismounting and remounting quickly in combat. These tactics proved highly successful in battle and were an integral part of the Roman cavalry's effectiveness. For centuries the Roman cavalry saw no need to adopt heavier equipment, no doubt due to the benefits of fighting without armor. As long as the cavalry performed its duties, Roman casualties remained at an acceptable level, and the Roman army met with success more often than not, there was no compelling reason to change equipment. This was the case for the late fourth century and most of the third century. The cavalry must have met defeat at times; even the Roman army was not always successful in battle. Throughout this period, however, the cavalry was effective. If the cavalry was ever responsible for a defeat, we have no record of it, and we may suppose that at no point did the cavalry consistently fail to perform its duties.

The Second Punic War marked a radical break. Now the Roman cavalry proved unable to counter Hannibal's horsemen, and these enemy troopers played a significant role in the destruction of several Roman field armies. Furthermore, the Roman riders, all elite youths, suffered numerous casualties in the process. When the citizen troopers' sense of insecurity and vulnerability reached its peak,

most likely at Cannae, they sought the protection of body armor and a sturdy shield and the reliability of a stronger spear. The Roman cavalry regained its effectiveness because of this new equipment. The benefits conferred by the new equipment included a combination of technical improvements (sturdier spears and shields that would survive the tests of combat) and psychological encouragement (the sense of security provided by sturdier weaponry and armor). Perhaps, as Rawson suggested, Scipio Africanus carried out this reform while in Spain.¹⁰⁸ This top-down view is possible but seems a bit unrealistic. It is far more likely the cavalry riders, driven by their experiences and those of their peers, sought the benefits of body armor and improved shields and weaponry. Once a certain proportion of young men individually chose to use heavier arms, we can speak, for convenience sake, of the cavalry reform as completed.

However this reform occurred, it demonstrates that the Roman cavalry was capable of adapting to changing battlefield demands. After the Second Punic War, the Romans encountered heavily armored Greek cavalry, and these experiences likely reinforced the original decision to adopt heavier armament. Any charge that the Roman cavalry bore arms inferior to its adversaries is, for the most part, untrue. As long as the Roman light-armed cavalry was effective against its enemies, it remained light-armed cavalry. When that lighter armament proved to be a liability, the cavalry sought heavier equipment. After the reform the Roman cavalymen were as well armed as any of their opponents, save the *cataphracti*. Based upon the criteria of armament and adaptability, the Roman citizen cavalry of the middle Republic was as effective as any in the ancient world.

Still, we should avoid viewing the matter of equipment too schematically. The advantages of sturdier spears and shields are hardly debatable. Body armor raises more difficulties. The feeling of safety and security and the actual physical protection afforded by cavalry armor could be significant. As we shall see when we examine Roman cavalry tactics, however, the Roman cavalry does not appear to have modified its tactics in relation to its armament. The adoption of armor during the Second Punic War can help explain the turnaround in that conflict, but long before and long after the cavalry reform, as we know, the Roman cavalry had been largely successful. By themselves, arms and armor comprise only part of a combat army's military effectiveness. They may well prove to have been the least significant factors after we consider the role of tactics and morale.

ROMAN CAVALRY TACTICS *CIRCA* 300–100

An effective ancient cavalry force harmed enemy infantry formations. The evidence for cavalry combat in the middle Republic indicates that the Roman cavalry performed this function. The Roman cavalry was consistently able, over the long term, to disrupt enemy infantry and, therefore, met the primary criterion for an effective cavalry force. To demonstrate this point, it is necessary to examine thoroughly the evidence for cavalry combat in the middle Republic. This involves revisiting some episodes from the previous chapter but with a different focus. The following analysis emphasizes two important issues. First, the Roman cavalry, according to our sources, could and did successfully harm enemy infantry and cavalry both psychologically and physically. Second, the Romans employed tactics that, if not uniquely Roman, were quite distinct from the normal tactics of many other ancient Mediterranean cavalry forces. The Roman predilection for shock actions against infantry may have been shared by some contemporary cavalry forces, but their preference for stationary hand-to-hand, or dismounted combat against enemy cavalry was almost unique to them.

Any analysis of this sort requires us to consider the reliability of our ancient sources. Unfortunately, we lack detailed eyewitness accounts for any individual battle in the middle Republic. We cannot create a “face of battle” for the conflicts of the middle Republic as Keegan did for Agincourt, Waterloo, and the Somme. Nor do we have the contemporary accounts of Roman battles to match the Greek sources Hanson used to reconstruct an archetypical hoplite battle. There are no Roman soldiers’ accounts of battle. Nevertheless, a fruitful analysis may still be made. Evidence for the cavalry in battle during the middle Republic comes almost entirely from Polybius and Livy. Polybius is by far the less problematic of the two authors. He had the great advantage of being able to interview eyewitnesses to

some of the events he described in the period 220–167.¹ Furthermore, Polybius' account of military matters is particularly valuable because he had served as hipparch in Achaëa and clearly had interest and aptitude in analyzing military affairs.² We may trust that his battlefield analyses are essentially accurate.

Livy presents somewhat more of a problem. He described the middle Republic from a distance of well over a century, and his ability to confuse the military events he transcribed, where he can be checked, is infamous.³ Hill, in his monograph *The Roman Middle Class*, went so far as to suggest that the passages in Livy that praise the Roman cavalry in battle merely perpetuate annalistic convention and, therefore, are unreliable. Blanket condemnation of the annalistic tradition, however, is extremely unproductive. Livy's sources for the third and fourth decade of his history, when they did not rely on Polybius, were sometimes based on second century Roman writers who were members of the aristocracy.⁴ These writers had actually served in the cavalry as young men. Therefore, the picture Livy painted of the Roman cavalry in battle is likely quite faithful to the original. The general authenticity of Livy's descriptions of the cavalry is further ensured because his work presents a picture of cavalry combat that is fully consistent with Polybius' accounts. Even the occasional references to cavalry found in the works of authors such as Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Appian, and Pausanias do nothing to alter the essentially consistent picture of Roman cavalry combat. The great consistency and coherence of the picture provided by our authorities and based on the solid foundation of Polybius assures us that our reconstruction of cavalry combat is reasonably accurate.

One additional note is needed. Even though the primary concern of this study is the citizen cavalry in the Republic, I have made no distinction between citizen cavalry and Italian allied cavalry when discussing the tactics of the Roman cavalry. There is no good reason to do so. The division between citizen and allied horse simply reflected the treaty status of those cities from which the troopers came, not any qualitative difference between the cavalry forces of these peoples. No evidence suggests that allies were equipped any differently than citizens, and what evidence we do have suggests that both allied and citizen cavalry performed identical functions on the battlefield. There is no reason to doubt that evidence describing the citizen cavalry in action is equally applicable to the allied cavalry and *vice versa*.

Because the tactics of the Roman cavalry and the difficulties it faced changed depending on the type and formation of the enemy

encountered, I have divided the analysis into two main sections: cavalry versus close-order infantry and cavalry versus cavalry. Some note will also be made of skirmishing operations. These divisions are somewhat artificial and certainly overlap. Nevertheless, we must not lose sight of the two fundamentally similar dynamics involved in all encounters. The morale of the forces involved predominantly determined victory or defeat in combat, and the Roman cavalry seem to have consistently preferred stationary close combat to any other style of fighting

CAVALRY VERSUS CLOSE-ORDER INFANTRY

An effective cavalry force acted as an additional disruptive force against enemy infantry formations.⁵ Close-order infantry soldiers gained their physical and moral strength from the shared responsibility for protecting their neighbors. The cavalry's task was to break those bonds of teamwork and turn the infantry unit into a group of individuals no longer able to function as a unified whole on the battlefield. The Roman cavalry met this standard of an effective cavalry force, often working in conjunction with the infantry to break enemy infantry formations and secure a Roman victory.

The Roman cavalry, perhaps, could have penetrated the front of an infantry formation in an unaided charge. This was always theoretically possible so long as the individual foot soldiers fled rather than waiting to receive the oncoming horses. There is only one clear account, however, of the Roman cavalry penetrating the front of a close-order formation, and it is very suspect. According to Livy, the Roman legions commanded by the consul M. Popilius (173) engaged the Ligurian infantry in battle for three hours with no decision. Seeing the Ligurian infantry unshaken, Popilius ordered:

[the cavalry troopers] should mount their horse and in three groups simultaneously charge against the enemy with as great an uproar as possible. A great part of the cavalry penetrated the center of the battle line and came through to the rear [ranks] of those fighting. Then terror filled the Ligurians and they fled, dispersing in all directions.⁶

It is unlikely, however, that the cavalry charged the Ligurian infantry alone and unaided. Livy wrote that a great number of the cavalry

penetrated the middle of the battle line (*mediam traiecit aciem*), and this must mean the cavalry penetrated the front of the Ligurian infantry. For this to have been the case, however, the Roman infantry would have had to withdraw a significant distance to allow the cavalry room to attack from the front; the Ligurians, of course, could not have advanced, or there still would have been no room for the cavalry attack. This is not impossible, perhaps, but strains our sense of credulity. If there is a kernel of truth in this account, it is probably that the cavalry worked in conjunction with the infantry to break the Ligurians by attacking their flanks and rear.

Normally, when the cavalry did attack infantry unaided, the infantry was already disordered. To catch infantry in disorder was a cavalry force's perennial dream. A disordered unit lacked the cohesion and strength of an ordered one. Cavalry had the edge in morale when it attacked disordered infantry and could reasonably expect to disperse the foot-soldiers. There are at least two documented instances where the Roman cavalry attacked disordered enemy infantry, once successfully, once not. In Apulia before the battle of the Metaurus (207), an opportunity presented itself for the Roman cavalry. Hannibal's infantry poured out of camp in disorder to form their battle line. The Roman commander Nero ordered the cavalry of the third legion to charge since, "a mob like that, scattered here and there in the manner of grazing cattle, could be overwhelmed and crushed before it can draw up into battle-order." The cavalry successfully confused the enemy to the point that Hannibal could not properly organize his troops, and the Carthaginians fled in disorder back to their camp.⁷ On another occasion the Roman cavalry was less successful. During one battle in Spain (195), the consul Cato drew the Spanish infantry out of their camp, then dispatched the cavalry against the enemy's flanks while the latter was still forming its battle line. In this case the Spanish on the left wing repulsed the Roman cavalry;⁸ perhaps the Spanish had formed in time to resist the charge. The principle behind both of these attacks was the same: the cavalry sought to exploit the already disordered state of the infantry. The cavalry might expect either to rout the infantry from the psychological force of the charge alone, or work into the gaps in the disordered formation. In the latter case the troopers would attempt to disrupt the formation by slaying some unprotected foot-soldiers and causing others to flee. When the target formation was already disordered, an unaided cavalry charge was a sensible attack – quick and intimidating.

There is only one explicit account of the Roman cavalry defeating an ordered infantry formation without infantry support, testimony to the difficulty of the maneuver. In the year 222, as noted in the preceding chapter, the consul M. Claudius Marcellus led the Roman cavalry to a spectacular victory over the Gauls. Marcellus and his colleague together laid siege to the town of Acerrae until news reached them that a Gallic force had attacked Clastidium. Marcellus gathered the cavalry from both consular armies and a small group of infantry and marched to relieve the besieged town. The Gauls at Clastidium drew up their battle line when the Romans approached. Marcellus led the cavalry in a bold assault against the Gallic infantry. The Gauls resisted the first charge, but broke when the Romans attacked their flanks and rear; some fled as the Romans cut down the rest.⁹

This battle illustrates the assault on morale involved in a cavalry attack. The Roman cavalry may have charged the front of the Gallic battle line first for Polybius clearly contrasted the first attack with a second against the flanks and rear. The Gallic line held firm under this first charge. The assault against the less well-defended flanks and rear was far more effective. The Gauls were “made useless for battle” (*δυσχερηστούμενοι τῇ μάχῃ*). This phrase does not refer to physical injury or death but rather to a loss of function¹⁰ and must imply some sort of distraction or loss of nerve. After the initial disruption the Gauls “were turned” (*ἐτράπησαν*); they turned their backs to the enemy and prepared to flee. Only now, with the formation broken and the battle decided, did the Romans slay the majority of the Gauls and drive off the rest. The Romans seem to have accomplished all of this in close-combat with the Gauls: according to Polybius, the Romans “fell upon” the Gauls (*Ῥωμαίων...προσπεσόντων*), suggesting they closed to do battle.

The importance of morale in this battle is made clearer if we can fix the relative sizes of the two opposing forces. Plutarch asserted the Gallic army numbered 30,000 in total and the force sent to Clastidium numbered 10,000. According to Plutarch’s sources, Marcellus’ victory was unparalleled: never before or since had so few mounted troops overcome so large a force of cavalry and infantry. Polybius remained silent on the magnitude of this achievement, but agreed with Plutarch on two points: the whole Gallic army numbered 30,000, and only part of that force went to Clastidium. Both authors agreed that the Gauls besieged Clastidium to draw the Romans away from Acerrae. The Gauls, presumably, would have entrusted this task to a substantial force, one able both to besiege

Clastidium effectively and to defend itself should the Romans take the bait. Plutarch's 10,000 probably serves as a good order of magnitude. Polybius may have not been completely forthright in this affair, minimizing Marcellus' achievement to give more credit to the other consul, Cornelius Scipio.¹¹ Polybius did not even hint that Marcellus won the *spolia opima*, an achievement well documented by other sources. Polybius may have decided to suppress the size of the Gallic force at Clastidium to detract from Marcellus' achievement. For these reasons Plutarch's number is preferable. In contrast to this Gallic force, Marcellus' force was, at most, some 4,800 cavalry and a small number of infantry who kept out of the battle. The Romans won not because of numbers but because they were able to disrupt the Gallic battle line.

Marcellus' exploit as a cavalry leader was apparently never duplicated during the Republic. His tactics ran counter to the more common use of the cavalry in that he relied on cavalry alone to win a battle. Generally, the Romans combined infantry and cavalry attacks with great success. Often, the Roman infantry first engaged the enemy infantry formations. The legionaries might prevail against their opponents unaided by cavalry. In such a case the cavalry might simply pursue the enemy, waiting in reserve until it was time to chase their already fleeing foes.¹² If the pressure of the infantry attack did not disrupt and disperse the enemy formations, the cavalry could deliver an additional blow along the flanks or rear of the enemy formation. These flank and rear attacks generated additional fear and disorder among the enemy often with devastating effect. At the battle of the Telamon in 225, the fine order of the Gallic infantry terrified the Roman infantry. When the battle began, the *velites* cast their javelins and dispersed the naked and vulnerable Gaesati forces. The other, better-protected Gallic infantry remained in good order and, when the *velites* had withdrawn, met the Roman maniples in combat. The Gallic infantry held its position despite suffering substantial casualties. Meanwhile, the Roman cavalry had defeated the Gallic cavalry in hand-to-hand combat atop a hill. Once they gained the hill, the Roman cavalry charged down against the Gallic infantry's flank and engaged in hand-to-hand combat (*προσέφερον τὰς χεῖρας ἐρωμένως*). The Romans enjoyed the higher ground and the benefit of a flank attack and cut down the Gauls where they stood. The combined efforts of infantry and cavalry destroyed the Gallic infantry.¹³

The battle of Zama (202) is also a particularly spectacular example of a coordinated infantry and cavalry attack. As noted in the preced-

ing chapter, Laelius and the Roman cavalry on the left wing routed the Carthaginian cavalry while Masinissa and his Numidians on the right wing drove off their Numidian opponents. Both pursued their fleeing opponents for a time. While the cavalry performed these tasks, the Carthaginian and Roman infantry fought in hand-to-hand combat. It was a brutal affair, and after a time both sides broke off contact. When the Carthaginian and Roman infantry clashed again, according to Polybius, the contest was evenly matched in numbers, armament, and determination. The outcome of the infantry battle remained in doubt until Laelius and Masinissa turned from their pursuit and struck the rear of the Carthaginian battle line. Most of the Carthaginian infantry died where they stood while the Roman and Numidian cavalry pursued others as they fled.¹⁴

A number of additional episodes illustrate the effectiveness of coordinated cavalry–infantry attacks. In the Gallic campaign of 200, the Roman army under the praetor L. Furius found itself greatly outnumbered by its Gallic adversaries. The Gauls attempted to take advantage of the situation and envelop the Roman line. Furius sent in his infantry reserves to lengthen the Roman battle line and ordered the Roman cavalry to attack one enemy flank and the allies the other. The Roman infantry drove in the center of the overextended Gallic line while the cavalry rolled up the flanks. The Gauls suffered heavy losses from all sides, broke, and fled.¹⁵ During the Gallic campaign of 196, the consul M. Claudius Marcellus held command against the Boii. In one battle the Gallic infantry drove in the Roman front line. Marcellus sent an additional infantry cohort to reinforce the line and dispatched the allied cavalry to pressure the enemy. The cavalry's first and second attacks – presumably against the enemy flank¹⁶ – checked the Gallic advance. When the Roman infantry regained its morale and advanced again, the Gallic infantry turned and fled.¹⁷ In 195 a Roman marching-column in Spain encountered a force of Turdetani. The Turdetani drew up a battle line and advanced toward the Roman marching-column. The Roman cavalry rode to meet the Turdetani and disrupted (*turbavit*) their battle line. The subsequent infantry battle, reportedly, was insignificant. Livy's account is somewhat confusing in its brevity, but since there was both a cavalry and infantry engagement, it is probable that again the Roman forces worked in conjunction. Alternatively, perhaps the cavalry alone disrupted the Turdetani battle line, demoralizing the Turdetani enough that they broke against the Roman infantry.

The best description of the havoc a combined cavalry and infantry attack could create comes from Livy. It is not likely to be a fabrication

of the annalists, for it glorifies the Italian allied cavalry rather than the citizen cavalry. In 193 the consul L. Cornelius Merula planned to fight the Boii. He deployed the cavalry beyond the flanks of the battle line. Meanwhile, the Boii had driven back the Roman skirmishers, and Merula sent in the second legion to open the main battle. The Gallic battle line, formed in dense ranks, resisted the Roman infantry's attacks. Merula then ordered C. Livius Salinator, prefect of the allies, to charge the Gauls with the allied cavalry. Since the infantry continued to press from the front, the allied cavalry must have attacked the Gallic flank. The "storm of horsemen" confused (*confudit*) the Gallic battle line, then disrupted (*turbavit*) and dissolved (*dissipavit*) it, but did not cause the Gauls to turn and flee. The Gallic leaders prevented a rout by striking their terrorized soldiers on their backs with rods, forcing them back into line.¹⁸ The Italian allied cavalry, however, rode among the Gauls and prevented them from reforming their battle line. The consul urged the infantry to push forward while the enemy was disordered and frightened. This combined cavalry and infantry attack turned the enemy in flight. Finally, the legionary cavalry pursued the fleeing Gauls.¹⁹

The passage illustrates well the psychological impact of a combined cavalry and infantry attack. The allied cavalry confused and disrupted the Gallic line: *confudit* and *turbavit* are terms of disruption and upset, not physical injury. Gaps must have existed for the allies to ride among the infantry. Along the front, the pressure of the Roman infantry combined with the action of the cavalry to turn a unified Gallic formation into a mass of fleeing individuals. Livy's terms clearly emphasize the entropy caused by a cavalry charge, and his portrait of events is fully consistent with our other testimony.

A final example of a coordinated attack comes from the Spanish campaign of 180. The Celtiberians engaged the Roman legions front to front, apparently, but then adopted a wedge formation. They had nearly broken the Roman line with this formation.²⁰ The proconsul Q. Fulvius Flaccus then instructed the Roman cavalry to attack the enemy wedge:

You will accomplish this [assault] with greater force if you ride in on horses freed of their reins, something which tradition says the Roman cavalry often accomplished with great praise. [The Roman cavalry] obeyed his command and loosing the reins ran twice back and forth with a great slaughtering of the enemy, after all their spears had snapped. When the wedge disintegrated in which the

Celtiberians had all their hope they panicked and nearly abandoning the fight looked for a place to flee.²¹

The reference to snapping spears, embellished or not, suggests the Roman cavalry again was in close-combat.²² Once the Celtiberians were turned, the allied cavalry charged the disheartened enemy and scattered them.²³ Again, disorder and fear were important factors in this battle.

Walsh has doubted the authenticity of this passage because it appears to be mimicked in 39.31 where the cavalry also neutralized a Celtiberian wedge.²⁴ There are good grounds, however, for accepting the basic accuracy of this account and the critical role of the cavalry in this battle. Flaccus vowed a temple to *Fortuna Equestris* to commemorate this particular victory. Livy mentions the vow again for the following year: Flaccus was consul and wished to fulfill his vow to build a temple before conducting public business.²⁵ Finally, when Flaccus was censor in 173, there was an uproar concerning the temple to *Fortuna Equestris*: Flaccus, wishing this temple to be the largest and most splendid in Rome, stripped half of the marble roof tiles from the temple of Juno Lacinia in Bruttium in order to place them on his temple. The senate moved to block his actions and made atonement to Juno for his sacrilege.²⁶ The notice of the temple's dedication to the good fortune of the cavalry and the strange circumstantial event associated with the building of this temple leave little doubt that contemporary Romans believed the cavalry defeated the Celtiberians in 180.

The evidence seen so far provides a clear and consistent picture of the Roman cavalry's role in battle. By engaging in close-combat with the enemy infantry and working in conjunction with the already engaged Roman infantry, the cavalry could tip the balance and force an enemy formation to disintegrate completely. Clearly, the Roman cavalry were successful in these coordinated attacks. Culham's analysis of infantry dynamics can help us understand why.²⁷ Coordinated cavalry and infantry attacks were so successful because they applied pressure on multiple faces of an enemy formation. A close-order infantry formation was intended to face forward and engage the enemy along its front. The soldiers could best maintain their unit-cohesion, with all its accompanying benefits, if all focused in one direction against one enemy. The coordinated attacks of cavalry and infantry forced an enemy formation to respond to threats from different directions, divided the attention of the individuals in the formation, caused distraction, and, thereby, increased

the formation's internal entropy. When cavalry attacked the infantry's flanks, it harmed or put the fear of harm into individuals who were not in the front ranks of the infantry and had been safe from any immediate risk of harm from enemy weapons. Now these individuals were within the killing zone. This caused additional psychological and physical harm to the infantry soldiers, increasing the entropy within the formation. From the cavalry's perspective a flank or rear attack was also far less costly in terms of humans and horses. An infantry formation engaged along its front could not offer as formidable a defense on its flanks. If individuals along the flank turned to meet the cavalry attack, they would further weaken the cohesion of the formation as soldiers faced in multiple directions. Under these conditions the soldiers no longer fought as a unit, and the formation would soon degenerate into a mob of individuals focused more upon self-protection than winning.

The Roman cavalry seems to have preferred close-combat against enemy infantry. Possibly, some Roman cavalry in some periods carried missile weapons.²⁸ Our ancient authorities indicate, however, that the Roman cavalry consistently operated as shock cavalry – cavalry that engaged in close-combat with its opponents. Whether the Romans chose to carry missile weapons in certain circumstances does not change the central fact that they do not seem to have used these missile weapons in pitched battles. Before we consider the possible reasons for this, we must examine the other facet of cavalry combat in pitched battles, encounters with enemy cavalry. Here, too, we will see a similar pattern: the Romans preferred close-combat.

CAVALRY VERSUS CAVALRY

The devastating potential of combined cavalry–infantry attacks could easily work against the Romans as the battles of the Trebia and Cannae dramatically demonstrate. To prevent such disasters from occurring regularly, the Roman cavalry had to neutralize enemy cavalry. Similarly, the Roman cavalry would first have to defeat any opposing cavalry forces if it hoped to reach the enemy infantry. The ability to neutralize enemy cavalry was integral to the Roman cavalry's combat effectiveness.

Polybius, Livy, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus all characterized “normal” combat between cavalry forces as a fluid affair with much maneuvering, advancing, and retreating. A cavalry force maneuvered into an advantageous position, darted in for a blow against

the enemy cavalry – often with missile weapons – and then retired, regrouping to begin the cycle again. It appears, however, that this conception of a typical cavalry engagement was essentially Hellenistic, not Roman. Polybius' only digression on cavalry tactics takes place in the context of the Achaean cavalry commander Philopoemen's cavalry reforms. Polybius clearly admired the training Philopoemen imposed on his troopers, and, to Polybius, this was the ideal form of cavalry. Philopoemen trained the individual troopers to wheel left and right and to about-face. He trained the squads to perform 90°, 180°, and 270° turns. The riders learned to dash forth from the wings in single or double companies and then rein in and resume formation. They also learned to extend their line by filling up the intervals or bringing riders from the rear.²⁹ The Achaean troopers, once trained, were highly maneuverable and able to dart in for a quick attack and then reform their ranks. At least some of the time, Hellenistic-style maneuvers included javelin attacks. In a passage in Livy derived from Polybius, the Macedonian cavalry was said normally to have fought by advancing, casting their missile weapons, and retiring in cycles.³⁰ In any event, Hellenistic-style training seems to have emphasized mobility and maneuvering for position.³¹

If Hellenistic-style cavalry tactics were characterized by maneuver and mobility, Roman tactics certainly were not. The Roman cavalry employed two basic tactics in response to enemy cavalry. They closed with the enemy cavalry and then either fought stationary hand-to-hand duels from horseback or dismounted to fight on foot. The former tactic was less common among Hellenistic cavalry forces while the latter tactic seems to have been practically nonexistent. Polybius, for example, described the cavalry fighting along the river at Cannae as irregular because there were none of the normal wheeling maneuvers, but both sides dismounted to fight.³² A survey of Polybius, however, nowhere reveals an association of the Roman cavalry with complex wheeling maneuvers. Instead, Polybius associated the Romans with stationary hand-to-hand fighting on horseback or dismounted fighting. Livy also made the same association in the passage mentioned above. In 199 Philip V dispatched a force of Macedonian cavalry to harass the Roman cavalry. The Macedonians, "believed the type of fighting would be that with which they were familiar, that the cavalry, alternately advancing and retreating, would now discharge their weapons and now retire." They were rudely surprised when the Roman cavalry opted instead to fight from stationary positions, some of the cavalry even dismounting to fight alongside the *velites*.³³

Dionysius of Halicarnassus explicitly contrasted Roman and Hellenistic cavalry tactics when describing the battle at Asculum (279). Each cavalry force used those tactics in which it had the advantage. The Roman cavalry opted for stationary hand-to-hand combat while Pyrrhus' Greek cavalry resorted to flanking and wheeling maneuvers. When the Romans found themselves pursued by the Greeks, they wheeled about, halted, and "fought as infantry" (ἐπεξομάχουν). Perhaps the latter term simply refers to the fact that the Romans halted their horses and fought from a stationary position. However, when Dionysius mentioned the Roman penchant for fighting stationary battles, he called such a fight a *σταδίαν μάχην*, "a standing firm battle." Here he explicitly said they fought as infantry. The term is usually used in contrast to a naval battle,³⁴ for example, fighting like infantry from aboard a ship. The most reasonable interpretation is that Dionysius meant the Roman cavalry fought on foot as the infantry did. In any case, the Greek cavalry troopers, when they found the Romans to be their equals in close combat, swerved and rode past them then turned and charged back.³⁵

Appian contrasted Roman and Numidian tactics at the battle of Carmona during the Second Punic War. Scipio's forces experienced difficulties there because the Numidians would cast their darts, retreat, and then wheel to charge again. Scipio ordered his cavalry to level their spears and charge the Numidians without pause, leaving the Numidians no time to wheel. The Romans drove the Numidians back to their camp.³⁶ The next day, according to Appian, "the Roman horse prevailed over the enemy by the same tactics as before, by giving no respite to the Numidians (who were accustomed to retreat and advance by turns), thus making their darts of no effect by reason of their nearness."³⁷

How did these Roman tactics function in battle? In other words, what did a Roman cavalry battle look like? The Roman cavalry began some, if not most, engagements by charging the enemy cavalry. This begs the question of what actually happened when cavalry units charged. A British cavalry officer from the nineteenth century described the cavalry engagements of his day like this:

Cavalry seldom meet each other in a charge executed at speed; the one party generally turns before joining issue with the enemy, and this often happens when their line is still unbroken and no obstacles of any sort intervene. The fact is, every cavalry soldier approaching another at speed must feel that if they come in contact at that pace, they both

go down and probably break every bone of their body . . . there is a natural repugnance to engage in deadly strife. How seldom have infantry crossed bayonets! Some authors say never! . . . Lines advancing to meet each other have shown hesitation at the same moment, thus:

In the retreat of our army from Burgos three squadrons of French Chasseurs charged some squadrons of our rear guard; these advanced to meet them; both lines pulled up close to each other and stood fast, till one Frenchman made a cut at the man opposite him, upon which both sides instantly plunged forward and engaged; the Colonel of the Chasseurs was killed, most of his officers wounded and the French were driven back with heavy loss.³⁸

Psychological factors dominated here as they did in infantry encounters. High levels of morale, motivation, and unit cohesion were essential for performing or withstanding a cavalry charge. If the Romans or their opponents were unable to endure the psychological pressure of the charge, they would disperse in the face of the enemy. Ideally, from the Roman perspective, their opponents fled. At the Ticinus this seems to have been the case: young Scipio Africanus led a cavalry charge against a group of enemy horse surrounding his father and dispersed them. At Zama (202) Laelius charged the Carthaginian cavalry, forcing them to flee. The battle at Magnesia (189) provides an even clearer example. Here the heavily armored Syrian *cataphracti* did not withstand even the first rush (*non primum quidem impetum sustinerunt*) of the Roman cavalry but broke and fled. Likewise, the Achaean cavalry in 146 fled before the first Roman charge.³⁹

It is noteworthy that in two of these episodes the enemy cavalry was already suffering from some disorder. At Zama the Carthaginian elephants disrupted their own cavalry while at Magnesia the auxiliaries on the flank had just abandoned the *cataphracti*. These disturbances could only have weakened the morale of the riders, making them less willing to receive the charge of the Roman horse. Another example further illustrates the role of morale in cavalry charges. In Galatia the consul Manlius Vulso (189) and King Attalus of Pergamum led a cavalry contingent to reconnoiter a Galatian camp. A much larger Galatian cavalry force charged from its camp and drove off the Roman contingent. The Galatians killed a few of those fleeing and wounded more.⁴⁰ In this case the fear and

surprise felt from seeing a much larger force of Gauls caused the Roman flight. Casualties occurred after the flight began.

Although beyond the scope of our study, a passage from Caesar illustrates well how disordered and surprised cavalry could easily rout. The Gallic chief Indutiomarus spent a day with his cavalry, casting missiles into the Roman camp and calling on the Romans to fight. The Roman commander T. Labienus, however, kept his forces quiet and within the camp. At the end of the day, the Gauls departed in a disorderly fashion. Labienus seized this opportunity to charge with his cavalry from the camp.⁴¹ Caesar's words are particularly interesting at this point: "Labienus (foreseeing exactly what would and did happen) insisted all [his cavalry] should seek out Indutiomarus alone, after they had thoroughly terrified the enemy and sent them flying."⁴² The Gallic riders were disordered and so lost the psychological benefits of riding in close formation. They were also unprepared for the Roman attack, and surprise and confusion could only have contributed to their desire to flee. Because they were out of formation, the Gauls were unable to respond effectively to Labienus' charge, and terrified, they fled.

The charge itself could decide a cavalry engagement. If neither side lost its nerve, however, what then? Normally, the cavalry would stop short of colliding with the enemy cavalry. To my knowledge, there is only one explicit statement of this phenomenon in the middle Republic. Against Macedonian cavalry in 200, the Roman cavalry halted their horses when they made contact and fought from horseback or on foot.⁴³ On the other hand, there is no explicit evidence of a cavalry charge in the Republic ending in a collision. An argument based only upon the lack of any contrary evidence is suspect, and yet we may suppose the Roman cavalry did not normally collide with its opponents. A true collision of horses and humans in solid lines would result in nothing more than a heap of broken horses and humans.⁴⁴ There is no evidence suggesting ancient cavalry troopers were any more able to force their horses to collide with the enemy than nineteenth century riders.⁴⁵

Modern scholars have wholeheartedly agreed that ancient cavalry did not normally intend to collide physically with their opponents. Common sense must prevail in this matter. Accidents could and did happen, and individual riders may have collided with their opponents, but it is unlikely the Roman cavalry normally opted to collide intentionally with enemy horses. There was no point to the maneuver. If a Roman horse and rider collided with an enemy horse and rider while both were charging at some speed, the only likely result

was a simple trade-off as both riders and their horses collapsed and took each other out of commission. On a large scale this tactic would have been extremely costly in terms of damaged horses and riders. The Roman cavalymen would not have wished to incapacitate themselves for the duration of the battle, nor would they have wished to inflict such damage to their mounts in battle after battle – trained war-horses were extremely expensive. In short, the true shock of a cavalry charge was intended to be psychological rather than physical, an assault against the enemy's morale.

If both sides resisted the psychological pressures of the charge, the Romans generally sought to engage their opponents in close-combat. Following Dionysius' description,⁴⁶ the Romans would pull up to the enemy, halt, and begin to duel. A great deal of evidence indicates the Roman cavalry sought to fight relatively stationary battles of hand-to-hand combat. Furthermore, three ancient authors attested that this practice ran counter to the expectations of the Romans' Greek adversaries. It is important to be clear on this point. Roman cavalry troopers were not poor horsemen and simply incapable of wheeling and maneuvering like the Hellenistic forces. Virgil's description of Roman equestrian games reveals a series of complex equestrian maneuvers:

[The youths] galloped apart in equal ranks, and the three companies, parting their bands, broke up the columns; then recalled, they wheeled about and charged with leveled lances. Next they enter on other marches and other counter-marches in opposing groups, interweaving circle with alternate circle, and waking an armed mimicry of battle.⁴⁷

The Roman cavalry was fully capable of wheeling maneuvers. The Romans preferred fighting stationary hand-to-hand battles; no lack of equestrian skill required them to fight that way.

How did close-combat between cavalry forces work? It was certainly possible for opposing cavalry units simply to engage front to front, each preserving the integrity of its unit formation. At the Ticinus Polybius said the cavalry forces met front-to-front and were evenly matched.⁴⁸ He may have meant the cavalry kept their formations, and only the first rank engaged on each side. At other times the Roman cavalry opened ranks and intermixed with the enemy cavalry. Polybius' terminology for the cavalry engagement at the Telamon is particularly illuminating. The two forces fought *ἀναμίξ ἀλλήλοις*, "intermingled with one another." The term *ἀναμίξ*

generally means “promiscuously” and is derived from a verb primarily used to describe sexual intercourse. In this case it must mean the opposing cavalry troops had entered each other’s files. Polybius described a similar phenomenon at the battle of Cannae. There the Roman and Carthaginian cavalry fought while *συμπλεκόμενοι*, “intertwined.”⁴⁹ Two eyewitnesses from the battle of Waterloo effectively describe how cavalry there “intertwined,” and it must have looked very much the same when the Roman cavalry engaged an enemy. One British sergeant described the following scene: “the Life Guard boldly rode out from our rear to meet [the Cuirassiers]. The French waited, with the utmost coolness, to receive them, opening their ranks to allow them to ride in.”⁵⁰ Another witness painted a similar picture of a different encounter:

There was no check, no hesitation, on either side; both parties seemed to dash on in a most reckless manner and we fully expected to have seen a most horrid crash – no such thing! Each, as if by mutual consent, opened their files on coming near, and passed rapidly through each other, cutting and pointing, much in the same manner one might pass the fingers of the right hand through those of the left. We saw but few fall. The two corps reformed afterwards, and in a twinkling both disappeared, I know not how or where.⁵¹

The Romans, probably not uncommonly, opened ranks to engage enemy cavalry. The short reach of close combat weapons prevented those ranks beyond the first from physically contributing to an engagement. If two cavalry forces maintained cohesive fronts in combat, the extra ranks beyond the first were relatively useless, being unable to enter the battle. There were only two means to increase the number of troopers able to inflict damage on the enemy. One way was to extend the cavalry line until it was only one or two troopers deep. Such a long thin formation, however, would have been very difficult to maneuver effectively.⁵² Opening ranks and intermingling with the enemy cavalry offered the only other solution. Cavalry combat on these terms could quickly devolve into a series of individual combats, and it often would have been necessary to reform the unit after an encounter with enemy cavalry. From the Roman perspective, however, intermingling files might have allowed them to bog down the enemy cavalry and force it to fight a more stationary battle.

The desire to fight effectively in close-combat must have inspired, in part, the Romans' peculiar practice of dismounting to fight enemy cavalry. Polybius considered this a defining characteristic of the Roman cavalry in the period when they were only lightly armored. Their lack of encumbering body armor or clothing allowed them to dismount and remount quickly and skillfully.⁵³ From the way Dionysius described the battle at Asculum, we can envision Roman cavalry halting, jumping from their horses to fight enemy cavalry, and then remounting again to move to a new part of the battlefield.

Besides the battle at Asculum, we have a number of references to Roman cavalry fighting on foot. At the Ticinus the cavalry engagement became something of an infantry battle owing to the number of men who dismounted and fought on foot.⁵⁴ At Cannae, according to Polybius, the Carthaginian and Roman cavalry dismounted and fought on foot.⁵⁵ In Spain the Romans caused difficulties for the Carthaginian cavalry by dexterously dismounting and fighting on foot.⁵⁶ The Roman cavalry similarly surprised Philip's Macedonian cavalry and light infantry in 200. Philip's forces assumed the Romans would fight in standard fashion, wheeling about, advancing and retreating. To their surprise the Roman light infantry hurled their javelins and charged, and some of the Roman cavalry dismounted to fight alongside the infantry.⁵⁷

How did the tactic of dismounting function in battle? Even though it is possible that the Roman cavalry sometimes chose to dismount before engaging the enemy, and this *a priori* seems an easier feat, our evidence suggests the Romans often dismounted during the engagement. At Cannae the cavalry engaged and then dismounted. Polybius' account of the battle of Ilipa suggests a similar pattern. Polybius first wrote that those Carthaginians who had not lost their seats met the Romans and fought bravely. Then he wrote that the Carthaginians were thrown into difficulty by the dexterity with which the Roman cavalry dismounted, suggesting the Romans dismounted during the engagement.⁵⁸ When Livy described a skirmish with Macedonian forces, he stated that when the Roman cavalry met the enemy, some stopped their horses and fought from horseback while others dismounted to fight amongst the light infantry.⁵⁹ In this instance as well, the Romans closed with their opponents first and then dismounted. The Roman cavalry could easily accomplish this if its formation did not immediately intermingle with the enemy: while the front rank held off the enemy cavalry momentarily, the rear ranks could dismount and move to the front.

It is also apparent that the Roman cavalry did not always dismount when engaging enemy cavalry. At the Ticinus a number of the Romans dismounted to fight, but not all of them; this is true as well of the encounter with Macedonian cavalry in 199.⁶⁰ On many occasions there is no mention of the cavalry dismounting. Polybius indicated the instances when he believed the cavalry dismounted to fight and, to him, the normal tactic was to remain mounted and maneuver for position. Therefore, we may safely assume, at least as far as Polybius was concerned, the Roman cavalry fought mounted when he did not explicitly state otherwise. At the same time, both the encounter at the Ticinus and the encounter with Philip's cavalry provide instances when only some of the cavalry dismounted. We cannot say that the commander always issued a general command for all riders to dismount. Since cavalry combat could easily devolve into a number of personal combats, the individual may often have made the decision whether to dismount.

This tactic of dismounting was an effective means to defeat enemy cavalry. Polybius was very familiar with the intricacies of cavalry combat, and he made clear that the Romans could gain a tactical advantage by dismounting to fight their enemies. At Ilipa the Romans dismounting threw the Carthaginian cavalry into difficulty. Dismounting also prevented Philip's Macedonian skirmishers from operating in their normal manner. The troopers were unused to a stationary battle and were not up to the task.⁶¹

These accounts hint at the tactical advantage individual troopers gained by dismounting. The element of surprise played a role. By using tactics that surprised the enemy, the Romans could seize the advantage. Surprise translated into uncertainty and a lack of confidence. While this might not have caused an enemy force to disintegrate and flee, surprise increased the disruption of a unit. Furthermore, it appears the enemy cavalry was often unprepared to deal with a stationary cavalry foe. Polybius and Livy both asserted that cavalry forces normally wheeled and alternated advancing with retreating. Both mentioned this in the context of a passage where the Romans opted to fight dismounted. In the case of Livy, we read that the Macedonian cavalry was prepared to fight a mobile battle and were unable to cope with the static battle suddenly thrust upon them. Surprise coupled with novel tactics could be decisive in defeating an enemy.

Why was the enemy cavalry ill prepared to counter dismounted cavalry? By dismounting the Roman rider gained stability most of all.

A soldier on foot enjoyed a more stable fighting platform than one on horseback, even with the advantage of stirrups.⁶² Without stirrups or saddle, the Roman cavalry rider, as well as his enemy, had an even more precarious seat. When a cavalry trooper dismounted, he gained added stability and an advantage over his mounted opponent. In a cavalry encounter where the opposing files intermingled, the man on foot would be more agile, more able to maneuver around the man on horse in a tight space. The rider could not effectively use his weapon to both his left and his right. Consider, for a moment, the difficulty. A right-handed rider could strike to his right side relatively easily. To strike on his left side required him to twist his torso significantly and bring his weapon up and over his own horse's neck, an action difficult to perform with a sword, but even more so with a longer weapon like a javelin or spear. Even if the cavalryman did twist in such a fashion, he would now be quite off balance and more likely to lose his seat. Many a rider would have likely had to turn his horse to strike an opponent on his left or else risk falling from his horse. Even if the rider could execute such a maneuver, the man on foot could swiftly and easily dodge the cavalryman who had turned to his left, forcing the cavalryman again to pivot and twist in his unstable seat.

The combatant on foot – particularly the dismounted cavalry man, who was fully aware of the limitations of fighting on horseback and was not bound to a close order infantry formation – could exploit the inflexibility of the rider, striking the rider's weak side and continuing to maneuver to advantageous positions as horse and rider turned. The fighter on foot also could attack the cavalry trooper's vulnerable legs and the underside of the trooper's horse. Consider also that the dismounted rider could use the strength of his legs and upper body to deliver a stronger blow than the mounted rider, who could only use the strength of his upper body. Mobile, agile, and accustomed to the behavior of horses, the dismounted Roman trooper must have been a formidable adversary.

Caesar's description of Suebian cavalry in battle illustrates the cavalry rider's vulnerability to the dismounted trooper. This evidence for Suebian tactics does not serve as proof for Roman tactics but illustrates how a Roman rider might have taken advantage of the added stability and maneuverability of fighting on foot:

In cavalry combat they often leap from their horses and fight on foot, having trained their horses to remain in the same spot, and retiring rapidly upon them at need.⁶³

When our men turned to resist, the enemy according to their custom, dismounted, and, by stabbing our horses from underneath and bringing down many of our troopers to the ground, they put the rest to rout.⁶⁴

A man on foot could dodge and perhaps attack his opponent's horse, bringing down both horse and rider. This may well have been part of a Roman trooper's tactics once he dismounted.⁶⁵

There is one final issue concerning the Roman cavalry tactic of dismounting. Who held the horses while the dismounted troopers fought? We can only speculate. Cavalry troopers almost certainly had servants accompany them on campaign. Perhaps the servants followed the cavalry troopers into battle and held their horses when necessary. It is also possible that one trooper remained behind to hold two or three horses while the other troopers fought on foot. Perhaps, the horses may have been trained, just as the Suebian horses were, to stand in one spot while the troopers fought on foot. Unfortunately, we lack any evidence to guide us in this matter. The Romans must have come up with a reasonably effective system since they had a proclivity to fight on foot.

Neither dismounted combat nor mounted, stationary, hand-to-hand combat seem to have been part of the regular tactical repertoire of Hellenistic and Carthaginian cavalry forces. Yet they were standard fare for the Roman cavalry. Consider the following passage. According to Sallust, the irregular tactics of the Numidians in the Jugurthine war baffled the Romans (*ludificati incerto proelio ipsi modo*). The Numidians charged, cast their missiles from a distance, and retired before the Romans could close or strike a blow. These tactics caused trouble for all the Roman forces.⁶⁶ The Romans had used Numidian auxiliaries for most of the preceding century and must have been familiar with Numidian tactics. What this passage does reinforce, however, is our impression of the Roman cavalry's standard tactics. A comparison of Roman tactics against infantry and cavalry reveals the common feature of relatively stationary hand-to-hand combat. The Roman cavalry preferred stationary hand-to-hand combat to a more detached style of combat with missile weapons or a more maneuverable style with quick attacks and retreats. During the third and second centuries, the Roman cavalry employed its peculiar tactics with great regularity and profit, disturbing and confusing the enemy, or simply forcing the enemy to fight in an unfamiliar style.

Even more interesting, it appears the adoption of heavier cavalry armament brought no accompanying change in cavalry tactics. One, perhaps, might expect the Romans to have preferred missile combat in the years before the cavalry reform when the cavalry was lightly equipped. Later, after the Roman cavalry had assumed heavier arms and armor, it would be less surprising if the Romans then adopted close-combat tactics. On the contrary, the Romans seem to have employed essentially the same tactics throughout the period 300–100. How can we explain this phenomenon? We know that the Roman cavalry was not unaware of missile weapons. Why does our evidence suggest the Romans rarely, if ever, used them? First, we must rule out the possibility that the Romans were simply unsophisticated in their cavalry tactics, closed to different styles of fighting. To dismiss this possibility we need only consider the Roman cavalry's tactics as skirmishers. The Roman cavalry was quite successful as a skirmishing force not least of all because it employed several different tactics to overcome the enemy.

CAVALRY VERSUS SKIRMISH INFANTRY

Against light infantry alone the cavalry rider generally held the advantage. Morale was the key factor in these encounters. The formation a unit adopted had significant ramifications for morale. Close-order troops who stood their ground held the psychological advantage against cavalry. Skirmishing troops, however, tended to fight in loose, open order to protect themselves against enemy missiles. This made them exceptionally vulnerable to cavalry charges since very few individuals would have stood to receive charging horsemen. Cavalry could expect to disperse skirmishers easily with a charge.⁶⁷ Caesar related how his cavalry scattered foraging troops and then isolated and destroyed one of two light infantry cohorts sent to check it. The anonymous author of the *African War* wrote of another encounter where Caesarian cavalry surprised enemy light infantry, killing 500 and scattering the rest.⁶⁸

When light infantry and cavalry combined, however, they complemented one another very well, and the advantages cavalry had over unaided light infantry vanished. Polybius and Livy's testimony suggests that the Romans did not normally use combined cavalry and light infantry units in pitched battles against massed heavy infantry but rather reserved them for light operations. The battle at the Ticinus (218) occurred when P. Cornelius Scipio's

scouting force of cavalry and javelineers encountered Hannibal's cavalry.⁶⁹ Later that year the consul Sempronius sent out the greater part of his cavalry and 1,000 javelineers to counter a Carthaginian raiding party.⁷⁰ In 217 the dictator M. Minucius dispatched combined units of cavalry and light infantry to attack Carthaginian foragers.⁷¹ At Capua in 211 the light infantry cast javelins and charged against the enemy cavalry, and then the Roman cavalry charged.⁷² While in Spain Scipio sent a force of cavalry and light infantry to harass Hasdrubal's army in its camp with missiles and provoke the Carthaginians to fight.⁷³ In 200 a Roman force of *velites* and cavalry countered Philip's small force of infantry archers and cavalry.⁷⁴

Combined light infantry and cavalry units were particularly suited for dealing with enemy cavalry. In the Jugurthine War Metellus placed his auxiliary cavalry along the flanks of the army intermingled with light infantry. It was the task of the light infantry to repel the attacks of the enemy cavalry wherever they occurred.⁷⁵ Several days before the battle of Pharsalus, Pompey's cavalry harassed Caesar's army. In response Caesar dispatched his cavalry and 400 light infantry. This combined force was so successful that, when the enemy cavalry engaged, Caesar's force drove them all back and killed a good number without suffering any losses.⁷⁶ In these instances light infantry seems to have served as a defensive force against cavalry. This must have been its primary use against cavalry. The greater speed of cavalry made it nearly impossible for the light infantry to close with enemy cavalry if the enemy cavalry did not wish to engage. When the enemy cavalry closed, however, this allowed the light infantry to come into play. In a defensive role the light infantry seems to have provided much needed stability and protection for their cavalry. In one surprise attack during the Jugurthine War, the Numidian cavalry abandoned its typical practice of alternately advancing and retreating and charged at full speed into the Roman battle line – in effect acting as Roman cavalry did. Sallust attributed the Numidians' willingness to adopt this tactic and their success to the combination of cavalry and light infantry. The Numidian cavalry trusted their infantry would support them and so closed with the Romans, although they certainly hoped to disperse the Roman line with the first charge, and this, indeed, is what seems to have happened.⁷⁷ Caesar noted the defensive role of light infantry when describing combined German infantry and cavalry units in action.

There were six thousand horsemen and as many footmen,
as swift as they were brave, who had been chosen out of

the whole force, one by each horseman for his personal protection. With them they worked in encounters; on them the horsemen would retire and they would concentrate speedily if any serious difficulty arose; they would form round any trooper who fell from his horse severely wounded; and if it was necessary to advance farther in some direction or to retire more rapidly, their training made them so speedy that they could support themselves by the manes of the horse and keep up their pace.⁷⁸

These German warriors had combined the agility and stability of the light infantry with the mobility of the cavalry to form an effective fighting unit.

Our evidence suggests the light infantry served as a defensive base from which the more mobile cavalry could strike and then regroup. The light infantrymen were particularly well suited to this defensive role. They could move more swiftly around the battlefield than armored infantry. When the light infantry needed to ward off enemy cavalry attacks, presumably they closed ranks and assumed a close-order formation. We have already noted that individual light infantrymen were no match for cavalry. If the light infantry adopted a close-order formation, however, they might withstand the psychological pressure of a cavalry charge. In this way the light infantry could serve as a defensive base. When their own cavalry were repulsed, the light infantry could move up to form a barrier between their cavalry and the enemy. Their cavalry could then regroup before attacking again. In Roman armies light infantry may also have been useful in an offensive role, even though our sources stress their defensive role. If the Roman cavalry managed to pin down its opponent and force it to fight a stationary battle, the light infantry troops could work their way into the battle. In a *mêlée* against mounted cavalry the light infantryman enjoyed the greater advantages of agility and speed over the cavalryman. He had all the advantages of dismounted Roman cavalry⁷⁹ and one further benefit: he was completely unhampered by a horse.

Let us return to the question raised earlier: were the Romans unsophisticated in their tactics? An examination of Roman skirmishing operations clearly indicates they were not unsophisticated. The Roman cavalry both fought alone and deployed in mixed units of infantry and cavalry to accomplish its aims. This tactical flexibility in light operations makes the relative lack of variety in pitched battles more striking. One should avoid being excessively schematic.

Perhaps the Roman cavalry did employ variety in their tactics during pitched battles. According to our evidence, however, such variety must have been rare. Polybius, Livy, and Dionysius all indicated that Roman-style cavalry tactics were relatively unusual among their Hellenistic contemporaries. The Roman cavalry was distinguished by its penchant for fighting at close quarters and from more-or-less stationary positions.

These tactics did not hinder the cavalry. Throughout the period the Roman cavalry, with very few exceptions, enjoyed great success. It is not difficult to see why. Against infantry the path to victory lay in disrupting enemy formations through psychological and physical attacks. The Roman cavalry was much faster than its pedestrian opponents as it could easily circumvent the front of the battle line and attack the vulnerable flank and rear. In these flank attacks the rider could use the superior mass of horse and rider to pressure the foot soldier.⁸⁰ The open-order skirmisher or dismounted cavalryman could exploit the mounted rider's instability and relative lack of agility, but the infantry soldier in close formation had little room to maneuver and could not easily exploit the cavalry rider's weaknesses. Against cavalry the preference for close-combat and the use of dismounting as a tactical option surprised and disturbed opponents. The Romans could charge enemy riders and disperse them through sheer terror alone. Should this prove insufficient, however, they continued to terrorize their opponents through physical intimidation and close fighting. If an enemy cavalry force was not prepared to "stand still and fight," the Roman willingness to "mix it up" must have proved unnerving. This preference for close-combat is a key tactical distinction between Roman cavalry and many contemporary cavalry forces. We cannot say that the latter never willingly fought stationary close combat engagements; indeed, they must have. Such tactics seem to have been less frequent, however. The Romans, on the other hand, characteristically employed these close-combat tactics to the relative exclusion of other forms of combat.

From a tactical perspective, the Roman cavalry was no less flexible than other heavy cavalry forces. They possessed multiple tactical options in battle. Granted, the Romans regularly preferred close-combat in pitched battle over other tactical options, but, even so, this clearly did not diminish their effectiveness. The Roman cavalry seems to have regularly achieved its objectives of neutralizing enemy cavalry and disrupting enemy infantry. According to the criteria of an effective cavalry force, the Romans were effective.

It still remains to explain why the Roman cavalry preferred close-combat tactics in pitched battles. The effectiveness of close-combat tactics would seem reason enough to continue using them, and, perhaps, we might not even raise this question. But the very fact that Roman cavalry tactics seem quite different from those of their opponents should give us pause for thought. Furthermore, these close-combat tactics, as effective as they were, entailed much higher risks to the Roman cavalymen than a more distant and mobile fighting style. A cavalry force could effectively demoralize and disrupt the enemy with missile weapons too, yet do so from a greater, and safer, distance. Closing with an enemy increased one's chances to be hit as well as to hit. As noted in the previous chapter, however, the Roman cavalry did not regularly, if ever, carry missile weapons. To make the matter even more intriguing, the Romans preferred close-combat tactics even in the period before the late third century, a time when the Roman cavalry wore no armor at all. The Roman citizen cavalry preferred these tactics for as long as there was a citizen cavalry. How can we explain this phenomenon? The answer, in large part, can be found in the elite Roman ethics concerning war and combat.

COMBAT MOTIVATION

Cavalry service and elite reputations

Ardant du Picq offered this insight to the study of battle:

It often happens that those who discuss war, taking the weapon for the starting point, assume unhesitatingly that the man called to serve it will always use it as contemplated and ordered by the regulations. But such a being, throwing off his variable nature to become an impassive pawn, an abstract unit in the combinations of battle, is a creature born of the musings of the library and not a real man. Man is flesh and blood; he is body and soul. And, strong as the soul often is, it can not dominate the body to the point where there will not be a revolt of the flesh and mental perturbation in the face of destruction.¹

Regardless of training, skill, tactics, or equipment, if the individual soldier proved unwilling to enter battle or unwilling to remain in battle once engaged, he would be ineffective in battle. The same was true at the level of the unit. If the individuals in the unit were not sufficiently motivated to enter the fight and continue to fight, the unit would be ineffective, retreating, or disintegrating on the battlefield. Ultimately, the Roman cavalry's effectiveness depended upon the motivation of its individual riders. Therefore, we cannot accurately assess the combat effectiveness of the Roman cavalry without considering the motivation of its individual riders.

Combat motivation for the Roman cavalryman derived from numerous sources, only some of which we can identify. Leadership, *esprit*, and unit cohesion operated as collective forces that motivated the cavalry to perform well as a group.² What made the Roman cavalrymen particularly stand out, however, whether as officers or regular troopers, was the emphasis their society placed

upon *virtus*, or martial courage. The desire to acquire a reputation for *virtus* and the corollary desire to avoid a reputation for cowardice impelled Roman riders to enter the fray and to keep fighting. Our evidence indicates the Roman troopers were equally, if not more, motivated to fight than their opponents.³

LEADERSHIP

Xenophon asserted, "there is small risk a general will be regarded with contempt by those he leads, if, whatever he may have to preach, he shows himself best able to perform."⁴ This dictum was as applicable to the middle Republic as it was to fourth century Greece. Any officer who showed himself willing, even eager, to engage in battle would motivate his riders to do the same by inspiring them or shaming them into action.⁵ The role of a good officer in urging his riders forward became even more important during a charge. A cavalry unit whose members were disciplined and committed to the charge could scatter its less motivated opponents without ever coming into contact. Officers who continued to ride at the enemy without hesitation and urged their men forward by example could play a significant role in keeping a unit together. To what extent did Roman cavalry officers effectively motivate their troopers to fight well?

First, who were the officers of a citizen cavalry contingent? Each citizen contingent was divided into *turmae* of thirty men each. Each *turma* was then subdivided into three units of ten men. The military tribunes selected a commander, called a *decurio*, for each group of ten men, and each *decurio* selected a rear-officer, called an *optio*, for his unit of ten men. The *decurio* in each *turma* first chosen by the tribunes was the commander of that *turma*.⁶ These officer positions were a permanent part of the Roman cavalry force. What role did these cavalry officers play in motivating their troopers to fight? There are essentially two issues involved. First, to what extent were cavalry officers required to share in the risks of combat with their troopers? Second, how driven were these officers to display personal courage and valor and, therefore, encourage or shame their troopers to do the same?

The first issue is dealt with most easily. The cavalry officers shared equally in the dangers of battle with their troopers. The very function of cavalry officers ensured this. Much more than infantry officers, cavalry officers served as guides for their troopers, leading them

through complex maneuvers in an orderly fashion and ensuring troopers preserved the proper formation at the end of any maneuver. The ratio of officers to soldiers in an infantry maniple was at least 1:20; in the cavalry the ratio of officers to troopers was 1:4.⁷ The much higher proportion of officers to troopers in the cavalry reflects the importance of the cavalry officers as the focal points and guides for maneuvers.

Comparative evidence from modern cavalry manuals suggests that cavalry officers played the central role in maintaining the proper formation of their cavalry units and, therefore, accompanied the units into battle. Early nineteenth century British cavalry deployed in squadrons of 132 men arranged in two ranks. At the left of each rank rode a sergeant, then fifteen men and a corporal. Another fifteen men came between the first corporal and a second sergeant and corporal; then another fifteen men and a third corporal. Finally, another fifteen men with a third sergeant as the last man on the right.⁸ The squadron commander rode at the front of the formation. When the squadron wheeled right, the sergeant on the left rank served as the pivot point while the sergeant on the right led the wheeling flank through the demi-circle. The squadron commander rode in front, regulating the speed of the maneuver by moderating his speed. At the end of the maneuver, the whole squadron dressed its ranks according to the position of the cavalry officers in the center.⁹ A late nineteenth century Prussian cavalry manual also emphasized the need for the cavalry commander to lead rather than direct. In this manual's illustrations, the officer in charge of the squadron, regiment, or division always rides in front.

There were two practical reasons for the unit commander to ride in front. First, because the commander served as a guide when maneuvering, his officers and troopers had to be able to observe and follow him. Second, the commander issued all commands. Both the Prussian and British manuals noted how difficult it could be to hear the commands of the officer, and all three noted that the cavalry commander's officers should vocally echo his commands to ensure that all in the unit hear properly. The Prussian cavalry manual pointed out that it was much easier to hear the commander when he was in front of the formation. Of course, such a statement presumed the commander could lead from positions other than the front. Nevertheless, the diagrams for cavalry formations consistently depict the commanders riding at the head of their troops. It appears cavalry commanders in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries usually led from the front to guide the riders through maneuvers

more effectively.¹⁰ From the front the cavalry commander was also in the prime position to motivate his men to fight by being among the first to encounter the enemy. In short, the evidence from the modern era indicates that cavalry officers accompanied their troopers into battle and shared the risks of battle.

We cannot be certain that the Roman cavalry officer fulfilled the same role as his later counterparts, but he almost certainly did. The ratio of cavalry officers to riders in the Roman army was even higher than in the British army of the early nineteenth century. What was the purpose of so many officers if not to serve as guides in various maneuvers? Polybius referred to one set of officers as *οἰπαγοί* (*optiones*), or officers of the rear rank. This suggests their function was to serve as a guide for one end of the unit of ten men. By the same token it is likely the Roman cavalry commander, whatever his actual rank, often led from the front. Someone had to issue commands and initiate action, and, according to our cavalry manual, it was much easier to hear and be guided when the commander led from the front. Roman voices were no stronger than modern ones, and it is likely that a common position for the commander was at the front of the cavalry unit. All our evidence suggests this. We have seen a number of instances where the commander led the cavalry from the front, and, to my knowledge, there is no clear instance where the cavalry entered battle without one leader at its head.

The officers and commander of the cavalry served as *de facto* role models for their men. The functions of their offices required them to ride alongside their men and subject themselves to the same risks in battle. This was only one aspect of the motivational value of leadership. What we should really like to know is to what extent did Roman cavalry officers move beyond being *de facto* role models and actively motivate their troopers by displays of courage and valor.

Perhaps not all cavalry officers set inspiring examples through their own personal acts of bravery, but we may suspect that many did. Rosenstein demonstrated that a Roman commander was expected to display personal bravery, risking his life to motivate his soldiers, and, if the cause was lost, sacrificing his life bravely.¹¹ Given the value Roman society placed upon displays of martial courage,¹² the officer must have been under no less burden to demonstrate his courage than the commander. This too would have helped motivate the cavalry to fight well in battle, or at least not flee.¹³

ESPRIT AND COHESION

In addition to leadership, *esprit* and cohesion were important collective forces of motivation. *Esprit* refers to the feelings of pride, unity of purpose, and adherence to a unit's ideals – the unit in this case being the cavalry contingent. Cohesion, on the other hand, refers to the feelings of belonging and solidarity that occurred at the level of the primary group, the *decurio* (company of ten) or, perhaps, the *turma* (squad of thirty).¹⁴ Both factors influenced the ability of the cavalry to function together as a unit and maintain a cohesive formation. The *esprit* of the Roman cavalry cannot be quantified precisely – if such a thing can ever be quantified for any combat unit. A number of factors, however, must have created a strong sense of collective identity among cavalry troopers. The social homogeneity of the cavalry was a major factor in collective identity. Each trooper belonged to a family that possessed the equestrian census, and, accordingly, each belonged to the highest economic and social class at Rome. In chapter one I referred to the various marks of privileged status that the cavalry enjoyed. These marks of privilege defined the cavalry as an elite group socially superior to the infantry. The sense of shared membership in this elite social group must have promoted unit cohesion on the battlefield.

The annual parade of the *transvectio equitum*¹⁵ also served to reinforce the honor of cavalry service. The Romans had established the *transvectio*, a parade through the streets of Rome by the *equites*, by 304. This parade took place on the anniversary of the battle of Lake Regillus, when the Dioscurii had appeared as valiant young cavalymen and fought for the Romans. As was noted, it seems probable that only the *equites equo publico* rode in the parade,¹⁶ but the *transvectio* served to glorify all cavalry service at Rome because it was a parade of cavalymen; it only celebrated the equestrian order insofar as the members of that order performed cavalry service. It is not unreasonable to suppose that the fanfare surrounding the cavalry ceremony would also have inspired those who served in the cavalry but were not members of the eighteen equestrian voting centuries. This annual procession added to the dignity of cavalry and contributed to the sense of *esprit* that surrounded cavalry service.

Several aspects of the Roman army on campaign fostered cohesion among the members of the cavalry in their primary groups. First, the Roman camp system kept all the citizen cavalry bunked

together in the same place within the camp every night. According to Polybius, the Romans always laid out their camp the same way with the cavalry of the first legion all bunked together directly opposite the cavalry of the second legion.¹⁷ Presumably, the cavalry bunked together according to their *decuriones* and *turmae*. The men that shared hardships on the battlefield also spent their free time together in shared living quarters, a system that would build a sense of camaraderie. In addition, the practice of keeping armies in the field for a season or longer helped construct a sense of cohesion. Day after day, the members of the cavalry served together and lived together, over time developing a sense of community.

VIRTUS

The collective factors of leadership, *esprit*, and cohesion and the individual's desire to avoid shame and punishment played a significant part in motivating the Roman rider to perform well in battle. Where the Romans seem to have truly stood out from their contemporaries, as Polybius noted,¹⁸ was in the great emphasis they placed upon martial courage, or *virtus*.¹⁹ The individual who stood out at Rome in the middle Republic was the one who enjoyed a solid reputation for courage gained through exploits on the battlefield. Because *virtus* could be demonstrated only upon the battlefield, the Roman cavalryman had excellent motivation to perform well in combat.

Once a youth from a family possessing the equestrian census reached the age of 17, he was liable to be levied for cavalry service and would serve a maximum of ten campaigns in the cavalry. While serving in the cavalry, the young rider could earn a number of rewards for courageous conduct. After a battle, according to Polybius, the commander recognized those soldiers who had distinguished themselves in battle before an assembly of the army. He praised the courageous deeds of each individual and presented him with a reward for his valor. A soldier who wounded an enemy received a spear. A foot-soldier who had slain and despoiled an enemy received a cup, while a cavalry trooper received *phalerae*, bronze medallions worn on the body or attached to one's horse-tack. The commanders also rewarded those who had been the first over the walls of an enemy city and those who had shielded or saved a citizen in battle. Polybius considered these rewards an excellent method of motivating young soldiers to face danger.

Those soldiers who earned these military decorations became famous in the army, moving their fellow soldiers to emulate them and, perhaps, surpass them.²⁰

The criterion for earning a military award is particularly important. The rewards for bravery – the spear, cup, and the *phalerae* – were not granted to those who wounded or despoiled an enemy during battle but to those who risked their lives voluntarily during skirmishes. This was the key criterion of battlefield valor: the individual had to put himself at risk voluntarily when there was no compelling need for him to do so. The Roman soldier fighting in formation during a battle was expected to hold his ground and maintain his position at all costs. It was simply his duty.²¹ The individual who put himself at risk when necessity did not demand it, however, displayed a superior form of *virtus* because he had shown courage beyond the call of duty.²²

Generally, then, skirmishers received rewards rather than soldiers fighting in close order formations. A duel between individual combatants, or monomachy, was an especially prestigious form of skirmishing. A very strong link between cavalry service and monomachy persisted throughout the Republic. Out of the seventeen instances from the beginning of the Republic to 100 when specific individuals – real or imagined – are named as monomachists, six clearly fought from horseback while only three clearly fought on foot.²³ Of those three monomachists who fought on foot, however, only L. Siccus Dentatus was serving in the infantry at the time. M. Valerius Corvus defeated a Gaul in single combat while serving as a military tribune, a post filled by men of equestrian status. T. Manlius Torquatus, on the other hand, was serving in the cavalry but dismounted and fought his Gallic opponent on foot. Of the eight remaining combatants,²⁴ most, if not all, were members of the cavalry class when they duelled.

The evidence for these duels is often shaky and, in some instances, completely spurious. At best, these anecdotes can represent only a fraction of the actual duels that occurred. Yet the Roman sources portrayed monomachy as primarily the province of the cavalry class. These sources preserve a cherished Roman tradition that reflected the ethic of cavalry service even while it helped to develop that ethic. Members of the elite were more likely to wish to distinguish themselves in battle because of the concrete benefits that could accompany a reputation for *virtus*; their efforts added additional exempla to the body of tradition concerning monomachy. At the same time the tradition that the great monomachists were primarily from the cavalry class and usually dueled on horseback will

have served to inspire young cavalry troopers to attempt similar exploits. They would feel that such idealized behavior was expected from young men of their station. Even those young men who did not achieve similar exploits were still well aware that they had to perform their military duties well, face danger bravely, and be sure not to disappoint their comrades.

Nor were scions of the aristocracy the only ones to value monomachy. Members of the municipal elite also valued monomachy as a display of martial valor. C. Marius was of municipal origin and Claudius Asellus and Artorius seem not to have been from aristocratic families. The Campanian cavalry had its own tradition of monomachy independent of Rome. It was the Capuan Taurea who challenged Claudius Asellus. Taurea was the finest of all the Campanian cavalymen, according to Livy, and had no match among the Romans save Asellus.²⁵ It was the Capuan Badius who challenged T. Quinctius Crispinus to a duel.²⁶ Tomb-paintings in Campania serve to confirm the tradition of monomachy – two dominant themes in these paintings are cavalymen in single combat and riders returning with the spoils of an enemy.²⁷ Clearly, not only the sons of Roman aristocrats practiced monomachy.

We have already noted Polybius' judgment: those who demonstrated their valor and earned rewards enjoyed excellent repute in the army. The prestige gained from rewards earned for meritorious service, however, was not limited to the army. A reputation for *virtus* translated into respect and prestige in Roman society as a whole. These benefits that accompanied *virtus* served as excellent motivation for young cavalry troopers, who would seek to forge reputations for personal valor. Polybius wrote that those honored by a commander were the only soldiers allowed to wear decorations in religious processions after the army had returned home. Furthermore, a citizen who had earned spoils and honors in battle hung them in a conspicuous place in his house to advertise his martial valor to all passers-by.²⁸ Clearly, the Romans considered one who had achieved distinction in battle special and worthy of admiration.

If the increased standing among one's fellow citizens and the ability to recount one's battle exploits at social gatherings were not enough to inspire a trooper to give his best effort in battle, there were even greater possible benefits for the Roman who had acquired a reputation for *virtus*. A reputation for martial courage was an essential key to gaining the fame necessary for a public life. Once a young member of the elite began a public career, a

reputation for *virtus* proved essential for continuing that career.²⁹ When Polybius discussed the young Scipio's preparations for a political life, he noted a reputation for courage was essential in all states, but especially at Rome.³⁰

Polybius' judgment is borne out by other evidence. Consider the census the dictator M. Fabius Buteo conducted in 216. At that point in the war with Hannibal, a large number of senators had died in battle or from natural causes, yet no one had revised the senate-roll since 220. Buteo kept all the senators who had been enrolled in the last census and filled the vacancies using the following system. First, he enrolled all those who had held curule office after 220 but were not yet senators. Next, he selected all those who had been plebeian aediles, plebeian tribunes, or quaestors. Finally, he enrolled men who had held no public office but either had enemy spoils displayed on their houses or had won the civic crown, the reward for saving a citizen's life in battle. In all, Buteo selected 170 new senators.³¹ A large number of these would have fallen under the category of citizens who had distinguished themselves in battle. Buteo clearly expected, as no doubt his contemporaries did, that those who had distinguished themselves in battle would ordinarily move into the ranks of the senate as a matter of course.³²

The early career of the famous M. Claudius Marcellus further illustrates this link between *virtus* and political office. It is all too easy to assume the spectacularly successful Marcellus, elected to the consulship five times, would inevitably have completed the *cursus honorum* simply because he belonged to a noble family. This was not the case. Roman magistrates were elected, and, given the extremely limited number of consulships available, a number of senatorial scions must have failed in any given generation to win the favor of the electorate and gain the highest offices.³³ To win election to political office, a Roman had to defeat his rivals in electoral contests. Marcellus clearly owed the start of his career – to say nothing of the five consular elections he won – to his exploits as a monomachist. According to his biographer Plutarch, Marcellus was an expert in single-combat, accepting every challenge and slaying every opponent. He added to this renown as a monomachist by saving the life of his half-brother Otacilius in battle. Marcellus' commanders awarded him a civic crown and other military decorations for his exploits. These exploits firmly established his reputation, which increased to the point that he was elected curule aedile and selected to be an augur.³⁴ He was not guaranteed a successful political career at this point, but he had gained entry to the senate, the crucial first step.

Cato the Elder was also fully aware of the value of a military reputation. Although he spent a great deal of time serving as an advocate in the law courts, he was far more concerned to distinguish himself in battle, and by the time he had reached adulthood, battle-scars covered his body.³⁵

We can see quite clearly the value of cavalry service to the individual seeking to join the Roman aristocracy. In a society without political platform or party, a political candidate's personality and reputation were largely responsible for winning or losing an election. Whether standing before the centuriate or tribal assembly, the task of the candidate was the same: to persuade the majority of voters in each voting unit to support him more than rival candidates. Though not the only criterion for fame and success, membership in an established aristocratic family gave an individual a powerful advantage in elections for office. As one went up the *cursus honorum*, an aristocratic pedigree, especially membership in a family with consular or praetorian ancestors, became an increasingly essential criterion for election to office.³⁶ Birth alone, however, could never guarantee an individual political success. The scion of an aristocratic family wishing to succeed at politics had to establish his reputation and prove he was a worthy heir to his family's status. During much of the middle Republic, cavalry service was a primary means to justify one's claim to high status.³⁷ A distinguished military record gave an individual Roman fame. A reputation for *virtus* allowed him to stand before the electorate and credibly claim the honors his ancestors had received in the past. In short, he proved himself to be worthy of his family name.

Throughout his career the reputation achieved during years of cavalry service proved an aristocrat's right to high status and influence. When the praetor M. Sergius' colleagues wished to disbar him from offering sacrifices because he had been disfigured by his wounds – indeed he had lost his hand in battle – he responded with a speech testifying to his *virtus* as a cavalryman. He noted the campaigns in which he had fought and the wounds he had suffered in each instance.³⁸ Sergius clearly believed his exploits in the cavalry years before amply testified to his *virtus* and his right to participate in the religious responsibilities of his office. The address M. Servilius Geminus delivered in 167 also clearly illustrates the principle that distinguished service in the cavalry served as a confirmation of *virtus* and an individual's right to political influence. When the military tribune Ser. Sulpicius Galba rallied the soldiers who had served in Macedonia to vote down Aemilius Paulus' tri-

umph, Servilius harangued Galba and the troops for betraying their commander. To add moral weight to his tongue-lashing, Servilius belittled Sulpicius for being capable only of talking, whereas he himself had fought twenty-three duels and received numerous honorable scars. According to Livy:

It is said that at this point [Servilius] took off his clothes and recounted the wars in which he had received the various wounds. While he was displaying his scars he accidentally uncovered what should have been kept concealed, and the swelling in his groin raised a laugh among the nearest spectators. Then he went on: "Yes, you laugh at this; but I got this too by sitting on my horse for days and nights on end; and I have no more shame or regret about this than about these wounds, since it never hindered me from successful service to the state. I am a veteran soldier, and I have displayed before young troops this body of mine which has often been assailed by the sword; let Galba lay bare his sleek and unmarked body."³⁹

Servilius based his authority on his past prowess as a warrior, as evidenced by his injuries.

So far, the evidence pertains to men from praetorian and consular families, the cream of the Roman aristocracy. We may safely assume that cavalry service was not important only to those seeking the highest Roman magistracies. Certainly, cavalry service was very important for those from less distinguished families. The *comitia tributa* elected Romans to fill the lower, non-curule offices. In this assembly, a far more democratic one than the *comitia centuriata*, it was easier for men not of praetorian or consular families to win election to the lowest public offices. A distinguished reputation for military service was not the only criterion for election to these first offices, but just the same, a reputation for prowess could cause an individual's name to become familiar to the voters and give him an edge over other, less well-known candidates for office.⁴⁰

The expectation that those Romans who acquired a reputation for their *virtus* could embark on a political career and so join the ruling group at Rome provided strong motivation for many young cavalry riders to fight bravely and perform well in battle. This expectation was part of Roman tradition. When the annalists recorded the accounts of the great monomachists from the cavalry class, they maintained the link between *virtus* and membership in the political

class. The message remained fresh in a youth's mind because a series of constant visual reminders equated *virtus* and fame with membership in the ruling class. Throughout the history of the Republic, Romans built monuments to their military successes in the city. Harris noted:

Almost wherever one looked in public areas one could see claims to glory put forward by aristocrats and most of the claims were based on success in war. For example, from the *comitium*, the physical hub of political life, one could see, among the monuments close by, the *rostra* with the beaks of the Antiate ships captured in 338, the columns of Duillius and Maenius, and the Curia Hostilia decorated with a battle-painting showing M'. Valerius Maximus Messala (cos. 263) defeating the Carthaginians and King Hiero.⁴¹

These monuments served as constant reminders of the importance of martial prowess. A youth who hoped to make his mark knew early on the great importance of establishing a distinguished military record. Celebrations of triumphs would also serve to reinforce the great value Romans placed upon martial distinction.

Polybius considered the funeral of a Roman aristocrat a clear instance of, "the pains taken by the state to turn out men who will be ready to endure anything in order to gain a reputation in their country for valor (*ἀρετή*)". As a result of the funeral, where the deeds of the deceased's illustrious ancestors were recounted,

Young men are thus inspired to endure everything in the hope of winning the glory that attends on brave men. What I say is confirmed by the facts. For many Romans have voluntarily engaged in single combat in order to decide a battle, not a few have faced certain death, some in war to save the lives of the rest, and others in peace to save the Republic.⁴²

One might argue that not all members of the cavalry class wished to embark on a political career and some felt little drive to display *virtus*. In a sense this is true: there must always have been individual Romans who had little interest in a political career. However, it is reasonable to suppose that cavalry service fulfilled essentially the same role for the municipal elite that it did for the Roman aristocracy. We have already noted that monomachy was valued outside the

small sphere of the Roman aristocracy.⁴³ The municipal elites, no doubt, needed to justify and maintain their roles as the ruling classes of Roman towns. Scions of municipal aristocrats needed to establish their reputation and justify their claim to high status just as scions of Roman aristocrats did. Again, we can look to the Campanians as an illustration. The ruling class of Campania was a cavalry class. As Frederiksen noted, "it is clear that the prowess of the Campanian equites in the battle-field was matched by social power at home."⁴⁴ The proud young cavalymen fought duels and, according to Livy, competed with their Roman counterparts for a valorous reputation. The motif of the mounted warrior dominated Campanian art.⁴⁵ There is no reason to doubt a reputation for valorous cavalry service served to buttress the position of elite Campanians just as it did aristocratic Romans. It is no stretch of the imagination to assume the municipal elites of Latium, sharing the same language, basic customs, and traditions with Rome, would also view distinguished cavalry service as a mark of elite status.

Even for those who did not directly aspire to any political office, however, *virtus* was a valued quality. Roman culture did not place such high value *virtus* simply because it allowed one access to political office. Rather, the Romans highly valued *virtus* in its own right as a special, innate quality that distinguished one individual from his peers. Polybius noted those who had acquired the spoils of an enemy displayed these spoils in a conspicuous location in their house as tokens and evidence of their valor. Not all those who earned such spoils were part of the cavalry class. Many, no doubt, never held political office; many may never have entertained such desires. Nevertheless, the conspicuous display of enemy spoils demonstrates that the Romans valued martial prowess in its own right as a mark of distinction.

The playwright Plautus was not a member of the political elite, nor were his plays aimed at an aristocratic audience. Yet he clearly portrayed *virtus* as a desirable quality independent of its political benefits. In the *Amphitryon*, Alcmena delivers these words:

Let me have the reward of hearing my husband come home hailed as a conqueror. That is enough for me! Courage (*virtus*) is the best reward of all; courage truly comes before all else: liberty, health, life, possessions and parents, country and children are protected and preserved [by *virtus*]. Courage comprises all things. All good things exist for a man with courage.⁴⁶

McDonnell noted that this part of Alcmena's speech has long been recognized as Plautus' expansion on his Greek originals and reflects his and his Roman audience's estimate of the importance of *virtus*.⁴⁷ In this instance *virtus* is valued not only in and of itself, but because it motivates Romans to protect their lives, possessions, relatives, and even the Republic. Additional testimony suggests the idea was prevalent among the Romans of the middle Republic that an individual who died distinguishing himself in combat would gain an immortal reputation. Thus Plautus had the slave Tyndarus reply proudly to the threat of Hegio: "the man who dies while displaying courage, does not perish utterly."⁴⁸ The poet Ennius offered similar hope of immortality for brave warriors: "this is the day when the greatest glory will be revealed in us, whether we live or we die."⁴⁹

The phenomenon of battle scars further illustrates the innate value of *virtus* in Roman society. It was something of a social convention at Rome that an individual might demonstrate his *virtus* by displaying his honorable battle scars and recounting the campaigns in which he served the Republic. This display, according to our sources, instantly bestowed upon the individual an aura of authority, credibility, and respect.

Most instances when battle scars were displayed occurred within political contexts. Pliny the Elder raised the question of what person possessed the most outstanding courage. L. Siccus Dentatus (tr. pl. 454) was in the running. That man fought in 120 battles, won eight single combats, and had 45 scars on the front of his body and none on the back. M. Manlius would have matched the distinctions of Dentatus if death had not cut short his career. Besides his military awards he received 23 wounds on the front of his body. Although these two men exhibited great *virtus*, Pliny is clear that M. Sergius took the prize:

Sergius in his second campaign lost his right hand; in two campaigns he was wounded twenty three times with the result that he was crippled in both hands and feet, only his spirit being intact; yet although disabled, he served in numerous subsequent campaigns. He was twice taken prisoner by Hannibal (for it was with no ordinary foe that he was engaged) and twice escaped from Hannibal's fetters, although he was kept in chains or shackles in every single day for twenty months. He fought four times with only his left hand, having two horses he was riding stabbed under

him. He had a right hand of iron made for him and going into action with it tied to his arm, raised the siege of Cremona, saved Placentia, captured twelve enemy camps in Gaul: all of which exploits are testified by his speech delivered during his praetorship when his colleagues wanted to debar him from the sacrifices as infirm – a man who with a different foe would have accumulated what piles of wreaths!⁵⁰

In this last example Pliny noted that Sergius delineated all these wounds and victories when his colleagues wished to disbar him from an official function. He recounted his scars, exploits, and services as a defense. According to Sergius' reasoning, these great services he had rendered to the Republic demonstrated his fitness to take part in the sacrifices. Several other anecdotes concerning battle scars suggest a similar phenomenon. A Roman who bore scars gained while fighting for the Republic was one who deserved political office and respect. When Marius won the consulship for the first time, according to Sallust, he publicly contrasted his pedigree with that of the *nobiles*:

I cannot, to justify your confidence, display family portraits or the triumphs and consulships of my forefathers; but if occasion requires, I can show spears, a banner, trappings and other military prizes, as well as the scars on my breast. These are my portraits, these my patent of nobility, not left me by my inheritance as theirs were, but won by my own innumerable efforts and perils.⁵¹

Pleas of this nature apparently held some weight with the electorate since Marius reached the consulship although a *novus homo*. A few years later, M' Aquilius narrowly escaped conviction for extortion by revealing his battle scars. According to Livy's epitomator, Aquilius refused to appeal to the jury. Nevertheless, his advocate, M. Antonius, tore open Aquilius' tunic and revealed Aquilius' battle scars for all to see. Cicero clearly believed that Aquilius was guilty, yet the battle scars reminded the jury of his services during the recent slave revolt in Sicily. The jury summarily acquitted Aquilius after the display.⁵² In this case the battle scars, tangible reminders of Aquilius' service to the Republic, served to demonstrate his innocence or at least reminded the jury that his services far outweighed his crimes. As late as 18, battle scars supported an indivi-

dual's claim to political power. When Augustus revised the senate in that year he passed over Licinius Regulus. In the middle of the senate-house, Regulus tore open his clothing, displayed his scars and enumerated his campaigns. Regulus remained on the list of senators.⁵³

Livy noted several instances when ordinary citizens displayed their battle scars to gain credibility and respect. In 495 an old man, impoverished by debt, entered the Forum. The crowd recognized him despite his ragged appearance, and word passed round that he had once earned military honors. To confirm these honors, the man displayed the scars on his body that testified to his service in various battles.⁵⁴ Later that same year the consul Ap. Claudius began to deliver harsh verdicts against debtors, so that many were bound and handed over to their creditors. When some soldiers were treated in this fashion, they appealed to the other consul Servilius. Reproaching Servilius for his inaction, each soldier cited his military services and displayed the scars he had received in battle. These pleas moved Servilius to intervene.⁵⁵ In 406 the plebeian tribunes fanned the popular discontent with the numerous wars the Senate wished to prosecute. They declared the Senate was really waging war on the Roman people by forcing them to give their lives in battle. As part of their display, the tribunes grabbed hold of veterans, listed the campaigns in which each had served, and displayed each one's battle scars to the populace. The tribunes successfully generated opposition to a new war.⁵⁶ In 385 M. Manlius wished to stir up resentment against the Senate. A certain centurion who had gained renown for his martial deeds had been condemned for debt. As he was led away, Manlius grabbed him and brought him to the Forum. Manlius harangued the senate and moneylenders and publicly paid the debt owed by the centurion. The centurion entered the rowdy crowd and incited it further by displaying his battle scars and recounting the campaigns in which he had earned these scars.

We have good reason to doubt the historicity of these stories. All come from a very early period in the Republic, and it is not unlikely Livy or his sources invented these details to make the account of the struggle between the orders more vivid. Nevertheless, these episodes illustrate the Roman view that battle scars provided an individual with physical proof of services to the state and, therefore, increased his status.

When Ennius wrote, "all mortals desire to be praised," he simply reaffirmed what Romans already knew. Courage in battle was a sure way to gain a reputation at Rome. No matter what one's station, a

reputation for valor enhanced a Roman's status. The stories of a valorous man were more credible, the misfortunes of one who had served the state more upsetting. When we consider the magnitude of Rome's military burdens, it is not surprising that *virtus* was so highly prized. The Republic remained safe and was able to assert its influence over other peoples because its soldiers were generally successful in battle.⁵⁷ Therefore, those who could prove their martial courage and demonstrate their services to the Republic received special distinction and honor.

The proof of one's service to the Republic had to be convincing. One of the reasons battle scars were so effective was that they were undeniable tokens that one had been cut and bled in the service of the Republic. Visible signs of *virtus* were far superior to hearsay. Plautus suggested this in one of his plays where the soldier Stratophanes tells a crowd:

Spectators, do not expect me to boast of my achievements in battle: I am accustomed to demonstrate my warlike deeds with my hands, not with speeches. I know that many military men have been dishonest: one could mention Homerionides and a thousand more who have been convicted and condemned for fictitious battles. He whose deeds persuade the hearer more than the observer should not be praised. One sharp-eyed witness is of greater value than ten who hear. Those who hear speak only of what they have heard, but, those who see know the truth. He is no good whom the fops praise while his own soldiers mutter about him, nor are they good whose tongues blunt the edges of their swords at home. Men of energetic action benefit the people far more than clever and sly men. Courage in battle easily finds its own eloquence and wisdom.⁵⁸

The spectacle of displaying scars satisfied both the hearer and the observer. The scars all had to come from honorable wounds, wounds on the front of the body, which a soldier received only when standing up to his enemy. Such wounds undeniably proved an individual's courage in the service of the state. The veteran elaborated on these proofs of service by recounting the campaigns in which he had served the state and acquired the wounds.

The Roman understanding that *virtus* required great risks and demonstrable proofs may help somewhat to explain the peculiarities

of Roman cavalry tactics. The Romans considered honorable battle scars excellent tokens of one's valor. At the risk of over-simplification, cavalry riders were less likely to earn honorable battle scars if they held back from hand-to-hand fighting and relied upon javelins to attack the enemy from a safer distance. Our evidence suggests that a Roman believed he could best show his valor by risking his life and fighting on until he achieved victory or death. It is not unreasonable to suppose cavalry troopers opted to fight in close combat because that was a far more dangerous form of combat and fitted with their ideals of how *virtus* was demonstrated. Roman leaders displayed battle scars to gain greater authority during public discourse. Roman history told the tales of great monomachists covered in honorable scars. Cavalry riders knew they were expected to fight bravely, and many must have done so. This interpretation becomes more plausible when we consider again that the Roman cavalry seems to have preferred hand-to-hand combat both before and after they adopted heavier body armor. The Roman concept of courage demanded risk. What could be more dangerous than closing to fight an enemy when only clad in a loin cloth?⁵⁹

Hand-to-hand cavalry combat satisfied both the tactical goals of the cavalry and the Roman ethic of exposing oneself to risk in battle. Of course, we cannot assume that all cavalry troopers risked themselves in battle at every opportunity and consistently lived up to these ideals. This was not likely to have been the case. But the definition of, and value placed on, *virtus* strongly impelled certain forms of conduct among the Roman cavalry and provided strong moral reinforcement against the stresses of combat. The members of the elite knew what the standards were for cavalry service, and they fought alongside their peers, who fully recognized what conduct was expected of them. In such a public arena where one's peers and superiors were watching and expected a certain standard of bravery, there was strong incentive to fight well.

The concept of *virtus* undeniably motivated Roman cavalry troopers to fight well, performing their duties under the extreme pressures of combat. To what extent, though, did Roman combat motivation differ significantly from that of their contemporaries? Polybius was as well positioned as any observer to assess this. As one who had both commanded Greek military forces and witnessed the Roman army in action on a number of occasions, Polybius could legitimately compare the Roman sources of combat motivation with those of contemporaries. His opinion is clear. The Romans valued martial courage more highly and had better methods to inspire cour-

age than their rivals. It is Polybius who stated a reputation for courage, though important in other states, was most important at Rome.⁶⁰ When he compared Carthaginian troops to Roman soldiers, he insisted that the Romans were much more efficient in military matters and their soldiers were more courageous than the Carthaginian mercenaries.⁶¹ Polybius' whole account of the Roman public funeral and the way it inspired Romans to serve their state bravely seems to suggest that he found these features particularly Roman. He believed the Roman methods of inspiring courage in their soldiers were admirable.⁶² According to Polybius, "considering all this attention given to the matter of punishments and rewards in the army and the importance attached to both, no wonder that the wars in which the Romans engage end so successfully and brilliantly."⁶³ He consistently indicated the excellent methods the Romans used to inspire courage. Since Polybius' ultimate purpose was to describe the Romans to an unfamiliar Greek audience, he must have thought the methods the Romans used to inspire courage – important enough to deserve mention when Polybius admitted he was not attempting to describe every aspect of the Roman system⁶⁴ – were somehow uniquely Roman.

Certainly, other societies also valued martial exploits and encouraged their soldiers to fight well. What is important to note, however, is the great emphasis the Romans placed upon *virtus* in their society. Even if the Roman emphasis on martial courage was not superior to all states, it can hardly have been inferior to any. The Roman cavalry was equally or more motivated to fight well than any of its opponents. The strength of Roman combat motivation is clearly no negligible matter when we consider the importance of high morale in combat, as the value, both practical and otherwise, of obtaining a reputation for bravery and avoiding a reputation for cowardice strongly encouraged the individual trooper to resist the stresses of combat. In the end that strong incentive could make all the difference between defeat and victory.

Combat is subject to highly circumstantial influences: terrain, numbers, the quality of equipment, the physical condition of the combatants, morale. The list could go on, and, ultimately, the results of a single battle or small number of battles can tell us very little about the general effectiveness of a force. To determine the general combat effectiveness of the Roman cavalry, we must first assess the combat potential of the cavalry and then determine to what extent the Romans realized that potential over a lengthy period.

Clearly, the Roman cavalry had significant combat potential. It had multiple tactics that it could employ successfully in response to different opponents and different circumstances. Some tactics in particular, like that of dismounting to fight enemy cavalry, were rarely employed by contemporary cavalry forces and had the potential to surprise and confuse opposing cavalry riders. After the cavalry reform the Roman cavalry's equipment offered offensive and defensive advantages equal to those of its contemporary opponents. Even before the cavalry reform, the lightness of Roman cavalry equipment did not limit a trooper's potential. A lack of armor allowed the Romans to dismount and remount quickly in battle, giving them a potential tactical advantage over their opponents. Finally, *virtus* held a dominant place in the value-system of the Roman elite. The ideology of *virtus* impelled those Romans concerned to distinguish themselves to fight bravely and expose themselves to risks in the hope of gaining great glory. Morale was the central factor in success or failure in ancient combat. The Roman cavalry clearly enjoyed sources of morale that were equal to those of its opponents and, if we take Polybius at his word, Roman cavalymen were driven even more than their contemporaries to fight bravely and well. Tactically flexible, well equipped, and highly motivated, the Roman cavalry had an extremely high combat potential.

Our survey of cavalry combat between 300 and 100 demonstrates the Roman cavalry often realized its high potential on the battlefield. There is no doubt that the infantry was Rome's dominant combat arm. We have seen, however, that the Roman cavalry consistently could and did help defeat enemy infantry and cavalry. There are two operative factors here that indicate the Roman cavalry was largely effective against its opponents. First, the cavalry was successful in battle more often than not over a long period; that is, it had a consistent record of success for centuries. Furthermore, we can see how the Roman cavalry realized its potential in these battles. We can comprehend and explain why the Roman cavalry was successful in so many of its encounters. In the battle narratives, we have seen the Roman cavalry troopers employ their peculiar dismounting tactics to great effect against enemy cavalry. We have also found Roman troopers seeking out close-combat, a potentially very dangerous tactic that depended upon the Romans' considerable morale, yet a successful tactic when properly executed. The motivational aspects of the *virtus* ideology generated and developed a distinctively Roman style of cavalry combat, one that consistently emphasized close-combat, personal risk, and physical intimidation of the

enemy. We are not at a loss to explain the numerous successes of the Roman cavalry. The Roman cavalymen were mostly highly motivated to fight bravely and hard, and, I suspect, more motivated than many of their opponents. In the end the morale of the Roman cavalry must have been a great factor in the success of their tactics.

There is no denying that the Roman cavalry suffered significant defeats against Hannibal in the early years of the Second Punic War. There is no need, however, to “explain away” these defeats. Contrary to what scholars have largely assumed, these defeats do not cast doubt on the Roman cavalry’s effectiveness during the middle Republic; they simply indicate the Roman cavalry was not effective in the early years of that particular war. The light armament of the Roman cavalry in this period seems to have been one factor in these defeats, the overconfidence of Roman generals another. Numbers were certainly important.⁶⁵ Polybius himself asserted that it was the numbers of the Carthaginian cavalry that were responsible for Hannibal’s victories and Roman defeats.⁶⁶ None of these factors are mitigating circumstances for the Roman cavalry’s performance in the early part of the war. They are simply explanations for why the Roman cavalry proved so ineffective in these battles.

Just as we cannot deny the ineffectiveness of the Roman cavalry in the early years of the Second Punic War, so we must recognize the effectiveness of the Roman cavalry in the later years of that war. The success of Rome’s cavalry late in the Second Punic War in part must have been due to the addition of Numidian auxiliary cavalry, but not in the way that scholars have traditionally argued. The Numidians were not categorically superior to the Roman cavalry; the evidence will not support this assertion.⁶⁷ The battle narratives indicate only that the Numidian auxiliary cavalry did their job, nothing more. So at Zama, Masinissa’s Numidian cavalry performed excellently against opposing Numidians, but Laelius and the Romano-Italian cavalry were no less effective on the left wing. In the end the combined rear-attack of both Laelius and Masinissa disrupted the Carthaginian battle line. The real benefit of Numidian auxiliaries in the Second Punic War was that they corrected the numerical imbalance between the Roman and Carthaginian cavalry forces, allowing the Roman cavalry to fight without being heavily outnumbered. This was the true benefit of auxiliary cavalry forces: they provided the Romans with greater numbers of cavalry without forcing them to make greater demands upon the Roman and Italian elite.

No substantive evidence indicates that the Roman cavalry was categorically inferior to foreign cavalry. On the contrary, our evi-

dence indicates the Roman cavalry was competent and effective. It fought against countless foes throughout the Mediterranean for centuries and was largely successful in its encounters. There is no need to go further. The Roman cavalry need not have won every encounter in order to be considered an effective combat arm. Even the Roman infantry lost sometimes. It is not necessary to demonstrate that the Roman cavalry was superior to foreign cavalry. All that can and need be said is that the Roman cavalry was competent and effective, a match for its opponents. Consequently, if Gallic, Spanish, Numidian, Greek, and Macedonian cavalry were not categorically superior to the Roman cavalry, one cannot argue that the auxiliary cavalry of these peoples superseded the Roman cavalry because it was tactically superior. Systematic analysis of the evidence must supersede more impressionistic suppositions. The traditional argument that the Roman cavalry disappeared because the foreign auxiliary cavalry was tactically superior is simply untenable. We must find a new, and more accurate, understanding of the end of the citizen cavalry.

DATING THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE CITIZEN CAVALRY CORPS

From 300 to 100 the senate attached citizen cavalry contingents to every field army. Every legion had a contingent of 200–300 citizen cavalry. In addition, the Italian allies supplied cavalry contingents ranging from 400 to 900 troopers in the third century and 250–400 troopers in the second century.¹ Individual Roman commanders might supplement these cavalry forces – and often did so – by obtaining auxiliary cavalry from allied states outside Italy. This system changed early in the first century. From then until the very end of the Republic, Roman and Italian cavalry contingents no longer accompanied the legions; in their place foreign auxiliary cavalry contingents served.² Unfortunately, our authorities are silent about this transition. We have seen why the traditional explanation for the disappearance of the citizen cavalry must be rejected: the Romans were not categorically inferior to foreign cavalry. We cannot explain the citizen cavalry's disappearance as a result of the influx of superior foreign cavalry. Why, then, did the citizen cavalry disappear?

Our first step is to fix the chronological boundaries for the citizen cavalry's disappearance. A fragment of Dio Cassius indicates citizen cavalry continued to serve in Spain in 140.³ Polybius referred to citizen cavalry as a regular part of the legions in his day, and this suggests that Roman cavalry served at least through the 150s, and probably through the 120s.⁴ Sallust's testimony concerning Roman cavalry in the Jugurthine War (112–105) is notoriously problematic, however, and cannot definitively move the *terminus post quem*. Italian allied cavalry clearly served against Jugurtha.⁵ Unfortunately, Sallust seems to have used the term *auxilia* to denote both Italian troops and foreign troops.⁶ A problem then arises in passages where he referred to *equites* alongside

auxiliarii equites. Hill considered it, “purely a matter of opinion whether [Sallust] means Romans as contrasted with Italians or Italians as contrasted with foreigners.”⁷ Certainly, scholars have offered diametrically opposed interpretations of Sallust’s words.⁸

Fortunately, there exists unequivocal testimony that Roman cavalry contingents continued to serve at least until the end of the second century. Valerius Maximus recorded an incident at the battle of the Athesis (102), when, “the Roman cavalry were driven back by the assault of the Cimbri. Panic stricken, the cavalry deserted the consul Catulus and fled to Rome.”⁹ The passage clearly refers to a contingent of citizen cavalry. Among the horsemen who fled was the son of the noble M. Scaurus, almost certainly an *equus equo publico* but, in any event, a citizen cavalryman. Suetonius’ testimony may extend the *terminus post quem* for the end of the citizen cavalry a little further. He wrote that the grammarian L. Orbilius Pupillus first earned his living as an attendant to magistrates. Then he served as a *cornicularis* in Macedonia and finally in the cavalry.¹⁰ Suetonius was precise on this last point: *equo meruit*. Orbilius was in his fiftieth year when Cicero was consul in 63.¹¹ Therefore, he was born around 113 and would have been liable for military service around 96. If Nicolet correctly identified Orbilius as a Roman citizen,¹² we may use this evidence to push the continued existence of the citizen cavalry through much of the 90s.

Our direct evidence ends here. We can only pick up the trail again in the early 50s. As is well known, Caesar had no corps of citizen cavalry with him during his Gallic campaign. In 58 Caesar and Ariovistus agreed to parley, accompanied only by cavalry. Caesar, however, refused to entrust his safety to his Gallic cavalry and mounted infantry from the tenth legion upon the Gauls’ horses.¹³ The passage admits little doubt: Caesar did not have citizen cavalry contingents with him on campaign.¹⁴ Nor did Caesar have citizen cavalry ten years later. He prepared to pursue Pompey to Greece with ten legions of infantry and 10,000 Gallic horses.¹⁵ Since three of Caesar’s legions had served under Q. Metellus Celer in 63¹⁶ and these legions did not have citizen cavalry contingents attached to them while under Caesar, citizen cavalry contingents apparently were no longer regularly employed by 63.

From the time of Caesar, any reference to specific types of cavalry in Roman armies is a reference to foreign auxiliaries.¹⁷ The only exception comes from the second civil war. Pompey had a large force of citizen cavalry that fought at Pharsalus. Frontinus’ terminology is precise: *magna equitum Romanorum manus*.¹⁸ Plutarch

corroborates: Pompey's 7,000 cavalry consisted of "the flower of Rome and of Italy," an unequivocal reference to citizen cavalry.¹⁹ We should attribute Pompey's use of citizen cavalry to the irregularities of civil war. The willingness of the *boni* and other wealthy Romans to oppose Caesar or, at least, follow the lead of the Senate and Pompey probably explains the use of citizen cavalry here after a lapse of some decades.²⁰ Certainly, Caesar had no citizen cavalry in this conflict. The civil war apparently marks the last use of citizen cavalry in the Republic. In 42 the cavalry of Brutus' and Cassius' armies included Gauls, Spaniards, Thracians, Illyrians, Thessalians, Parthians, Arabs, and Medes – but no Romans.²¹ By the 30s the term "Roman cavalry" seems to have been a label for a type of cavalry that did not, in fact, consist of citizens.²²

The period when the citizen cavalry disappeared runs from *circa* 102 to 63, and it is likely we can push the *terminus post quem* into the 90s. If we are to be any more precise within this period, our argument must enter the less firm ground of competing plausibilities. Let us consider the explanations scholars have offered for the end of citizen cavalry contingents. Most, including Gelzer and Parker, have attributed the disappearance of citizen cavalry contingents to Marius.²³ Madvig and Fröhlich, on the other hand, saw the Social War (90–88) as the ultimate cause behind the abolition of the citizen cavalry.²⁴ Little has been offered from either camp in the way of systematic argument. Ultimately, however, we should follow Madvig and Fröhlich and locate the end of the citizen cavalry within the context of the Social War. The main criterion for the better alternative is the ability to reconstruct a plausible motive and context, based upon the existing evidence, for the elimination of citizen cavalry service. The citizen cavalry did not simply vanish. The Roman cavalry had been a standard part of every Roman army for centuries, and would not simply disappear one day without cause. Someone or some group in the aristocracy had to have made a conscious decision to abolish the citizen cavalry.²⁵ Therefore, any argument for when and why citizen cavalry service ended must include plausible motives for the decision-maker(s) to have eliminated the citizen cavalry.

Some scholars have suggested, though never very clearly, that Marius may have eliminated the citizen cavalry as part of his tactical reform of the infantry. Marius, deservedly or not, has been credited with introducing major tactical reforms to the Roman legions. As the war with Jugurtha was ending, the Germanic tribes of the Cimbri and Teutones were migrating south and threatening Italy. In 105, these

tribes crushed a Roman army at Arausio. Some have speculated that the manipular formation of the middle Republic, with its small units and gaps in the front lines between the maniples, was unsuited for battle with the Cimbri and Teutones, who staked their battles on a massive initial charge.²⁶ Marius, according to this interpretation, abandoned the smaller unit of the maniple in the favor of a much larger tactical unit, the cohort, and formed a solid defensive line against the Cimbri and Teutones.

According to this logic, Marius must have disbanded the citizen cavalry as part of his infantry reforms. Parker peremptorily dismissed the problem:

The remaining reforms of Marius [beyond the heavy infantry reforms] are of more detailed and less general importance. We have noticed already the disappearance of the *velites*, and it is no great surprise to find that with them the Roman cavalry was gradually withdrawn from the legion. The inferiority of the Roman cavalry had been demonstrated by the Punic wars, and it was a wise expedient to substitute for it the more efficient service of foreign mercenaries.²⁷

Others have simply accepted that Marius eliminated the citizen cavalry without even this much comment.²⁸

There are serious problems with supposing Marius eliminated citizen cavalry contingents as a response to the Cimbri and Teutones' battle tactics. Most immediately, a Marian reform directly contradicts the evidence of citizen cavalry serving in 102 and 96. We should go further. Our authorities did not mention the Roman's cavalry often in the war against the Cimbri and Teutones and never suggested that its failure in battle caused any major defeats of Roman armies.²⁹ True, the Cimbri drove back the Roman cavalry at the Athesis, but the infantry at the Athesis fared no better than the cavalry. There is no warrant to speculate, without solid supporting evidence, that the cavalry was particularly unable to perform effectively against these Germanic invaders. Furthermore, the tactics of the Teutones and Cimbri depended upon an initial charge to overwhelm their enemies. Yet these tactics did not differ fundamentally from those often employed by Gallic forces, as well as by Celtiberian armies.³⁰ The Roman cavalry had fought effectively against Spanish and Gallic forces for some time.³¹ It is difficult to comprehend how a tactical need to eliminate the citizen cavalry would have arisen only at the end of the second century when the Roman cavalry had

performed effectively against similar opponents in the past. Equally important, why would Marius, an experienced and competent general, have supposed that eliminating the citizen cavalry would have increased the effectiveness of his army? Even if the cavalry was ineffective against the Germans, it was no less effective than the Roman infantry, and the Roman infantry would not suddenly improve simply by eliminating the citizen cavalry. In short, there is no evidence of any tactical motive for disbanding the citizen cavalry at this time.

Even more telling against a Marian cavalry reform, Catulus had Roman cavalry in his army in 102, after Marius had supposedly abolished the citizen cavalry. Even if Marius excluded the Roman cavalry from his forces, this clearly did not force other commanders to do so. No major military reform could persist without the continued support of successive commanders in the field. Neither Marius nor the senate could make such a permanent reform without the continued consensus of succeeding Roman commanders. As a useful parallel consider Marius' decision to accept infantry volunteers from the *capite censi* – men with no property. This innovation did not change any pre-existing laws,³² and if volunteers who possessed no property continued to be enrolled at all, it was only because successive commanders condoned the practice. In short, even if Marius did not wish to use citizen cavalry – an attitude utterly without support from our sources – his personal predilection could not become Roman policy without years of successive implementation by consuls and other commanders. Marius did not single-handedly force the abolition of the citizen cavalry past the Senate.

The need for consensus is one key to establishing the proper context for the citizen cavalry's dissolution. This military arm had existed over three centuries in its current form. Cavalry service was closely linked to the elite through icons, legends, and festivals. At the moment when the citizen cavalry was disbanded, most, if not all, living senators had themselves served for years in the cavalry as young men. The burden of dissolving such an ancient institution would not have rested with one commander, but within the Senate – or at the very least, with a large number of like-minded aristocrats. Such an innovation required considerable consensus among the political elite to be implemented permanently. That consensus would be lacking without compelling justification for eliminating the citizen cavalry. Marius, so far as we know, had no such justification, and we must reject him as the agent who eliminated the citizen cavalry.

The demands of the Social War (90–88), on the other hand, provide a very plausible motive for ending citizen cavalry service, and it is highly likely that the citizen cavalry disappeared at this time. The Social War strained Roman manpower to an extent not seen even when Hannibal had roamed Italy. When a large number of Italian allies revolted from Rome, allies who had supplied infantry and cavalry contingents to the Romans, the Senate had to extract even greater numbers of soldiers from citizens and the remaining loyal allies. By the winter of 89, the Romans had levied at least 15 legions, nominally 75,000 men, and the total number who served the Roman state during the war perhaps numbered 175,000. The rebels, on the other hand, probably levied no more than 130,000.³³ Some 300,000 Romans and Italians served in all, by any estimate a huge proportion of the free male population of Italy.

Appian asserted that the Senate recognized the severity of this war and continually sent troops to the various fronts.³⁴ From the military perspective the shortage of heavy infantry for the legions was the most pressing problem for the Senate. One can easily deduce that Roman manpower was severely strained from the unprecedented number of Romans and Italians under arms during the war. Another bit of evidence also hints at a severe manpower shortage. The Senate went so far as to conscript freedmen to garrison the coast between Cumae and Rome.³⁵ It is noteworthy that these freedmen did not serve in the legions, but in garrisoned towns, and it seems safe to assume the Romans enrolled freedmen precisely so that more freeborn men could be allocated to the legions.³⁶

Foreign nations could provide auxiliary infantry and cavalry, but they could not supply legionaries, the backbone of the Roman army. When war broke out, the Romans needed to find large numbers of legionary infantry at a time when their total manpower had been drastically diminished by the revolt of the allies. Their manpower needs grew worse in the second year of the war. If the Senate maintained the practice of levying men of the cavalry class exclusively for cavalry service, at least 9,000–16,000 perfectly good recruits – counting only the *iuniores* – would be exempt from infantry selection because of their census rating.³⁷ It would have been extremely difficult for the Roman state to have reserved the men of the cavalry class for cavalry service when its manpower needs were so great. I suggest that the Romans began to levy equestrians for infantry service to meet their manpower needs. Consider that the Romans were willing to go so far as to levy freedmen to free up citizens for the legions but unwilling to put those freedmen in the

legions. The men of the cavalry class, however, were fit candidates for the legions, and in a time of great crisis, it is unlikely that many grumbled openly about having to serve in the infantry. Foreign cavalry could offset the loss of the citizen cavalry to some extent. It had been established practice for the auxiliary cavalry forces of a Roman army to outnumber the citizen cavalry forces for over a century, and, in some sense, the exclusive use of auxiliary cavalry at this point was simply a change of degree.

One additional consideration may support this motive: in the armies of the 60s and later, there were no Italian cavalry – again, except for the Pompeian forces in the civil war. Of course, by that time all the allies had received citizenship, and there were no Italians – only Romans. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that the Social War placed unprecedented strain not only on the manpower reserves of the Romans but on those of the remaining loyal allies, who could not have supplied the numbers of cavalry formerly supplied by most of Italy; they may not have even been able to supply infantry in numbers equal to the Romans. The need to field enough infantry and the loyal allies' inability to provide the traditional numbers of infantry might have further motivated the Senate to seek their cavalry elsewhere and use most or all available Italian manpower – Roman and allied – for the legions.

This reconstruction is necessarily speculative. It provides us with a motive far more compelling, however, than any that can be found for Marius. This explanation also places the burden of the decision for abolishing the citizen cavalry upon the Senate where it must be. In addition, several pieces of evidence point to the Social War as the time of the change. The first instance of a consul leading an army without citizen cavalry comes from the Social War. In 90 the consul L. Caesar marched to relieve besieged Acerrae, leading only auxiliary infantry and African cavalry.³⁸ His army contained no Roman or Italian cavalry. It did not even contain any Roman infantry – additional evidence that the Senate was hard-pressed to find enough men to put in the field.

The second instance of a consul without a standard citizen cavalry contingent – and the first instance of Roman legions without Roman cavalry – comes from 88. Sulla had six legions with him that year in Campania. He crossed the Adriatic with five of these legions and a few cohorts and troops (*ἰλῆ*) of horse.³⁹ These horses may have been citizen cavalry; there cannot have been many of them. The term *ἰλῆ* can refer either to a *turma*, a squad of thirty men, or an *ala*, a full contingent of allied cavalry numbering in the hundreds. With

the grant of citizenship to the Italians, however, there was no allied cavalry. Appian presumably meant *turmae* rather than *alae*. Sulla should have had several thousand Romano-Italian troopers with him; instead he might have had 90–120. As with the case of L. Caesar, we see here a consul without a corps of citizen cavalry, although one might argue that most of Sulla's cavalry abandoned him when he marched on Rome. In any event, when Sulla returned to Italy in 83 to wage war against his political enemies, he had the same number of legions, but 6,000 horse. Sulla had left with little or no Roman cavalry, and these 6,000 troopers must have been auxiliary cavalry levied during his time in the East.

Auxiliary cavalry certainly served during the Social War. L. Caesar's infantry, as noted above, was accompanied only by auxiliary cavalry. An inscription from 89 records a grant of citizenship that Cn. Pompeius Strabo made to a squad of Spanish cavalry as a reward for valiant service.⁴⁰ Later, during the civil war, the Marian consuls employed Celtiberian cavalry against Sulla.⁴¹ These instances where auxiliary cavalry served certainly do not prove that the Romans disbanded the citizen cavalry at this time. On the other hand, these are the first instances, to my knowledge, of Spanish cavalry in use outside Spain. It is possible that this new use of Spanish cavalry in Italy reflected the Romans' desperate need to call upon outside cavalry forces.

If citizen cavalry contingents did not completely disappear in 90–88, the all-important precedent of fielding armies without Roman cavalry had been set. The civil war of 82–80 amply reinforced this precedent. Sulla had some 23 legions. He personally attested that the Marians had some 45 legions, and Brunt considered this latter figure likely accurate for 82 after the Marians had done much recruiting. The total number of Italian men in the field in these years was no more than 272,000.⁴² This was a substantial number of soldiers, however, close to the totals levied in the Social War. In this conflict Romans on both sides must have faced the same difficulties involved in levying so many men as they had during the Social War, particularly since thousands must have died in the Social War.

Sometimes we need to remind ourselves that all things are not possible where the past is concerned. If we are to have any hope of understanding the past, we must use the available evidence to construct plausible models of change and judge competing possibilities by reasonable criteria. Marius, by any reasonable standard, cannot have abolished the citizen cavalry. The Social War offers a much more plausible alternative. The Social War provides clear motive and

necessity for eliminating citizen cavalry while the arguments that might be made for a Marian reform are ultimately insubstantial. Nor can we find as compelling a set of circumstances for disbanding the citizen cavalry in the years from the end of the Social War to 63, when we know the citizen cavalry was no more. Certainly, the Republic's manpower needs never again reached the level they did during the Social War. The precise details of the change will forever remain unknown, but the impetus for the initial elimination of the citizen cavalry is best seen as a result of the manpower shortages of the Social War.

Why did the senate not simply reinstate the citizen cavalry in the 70s after the crises of the Social War and civil wars had passed? Here we can only speculate about several possible factors. The availability of auxiliary cavalry played some part in the failure to re-establish the citizen cavalry. We now know this was not a result of any categorical superiority of auxiliary cavalry. The greatest advantages of auxiliary cavalry were not its tactical capabilities; the advantages lay elsewhere. Auxiliary cavalry was generally drawn from the socio-economic elite of its communities and so could serve as tools for Roman control of an area both by acting as candidates for assimilation and serving as hostages.⁴³ Auxiliary cavalry could also absorb casualties that would otherwise be suffered by the Roman and Italian elite, a distinct advantage from the Romano-Italian perspective. Auxiliaries could also provide a Roman commander with greater operational flexibility. The Romans often levied auxiliaries from the regions in which they would serve. Requiring no transport from Italy, they could gather more quickly than Italian cavalry to meet the shifting circumstances of provincial wars. A perusal through the passages in Livy recording army assignments demonstrates that the Senate did not tend to authorize explicitly the recruitment of auxiliary forces. It was up to the commander in the field to levy whatever auxiliaries he deemed necessary. Auxiliaries gave the commander in the field the ability to levy troops quickly in response to current military situations rather than wait lengthy periods for extra Italian troops to arrive. Commanders certainly realized this potential in Spain, where they regularly levied auxiliary troops to meet the needs of the moment.⁴⁴

Auxiliary cavalry could also compensate for the small size of Roman cavalry contingents. Roman legions normally had a complement of 300 citizen cavalry and perhaps twice as many allied cavalry.⁴⁵ In many circumstances this proved sufficient; any commander who wanted more cavalry had to get it from the foreign

allies. Reliance upon auxiliaries for additional cavalry limited the burden the Roman state placed upon the young members of the Roman elite and kept the terms of service relatively short for many Romans. In the third century the citizen cavalry contingent of an army had generally been much smaller than the allied contingent. In the second century the small citizen cavalry force was regularly greatly outnumbered by both allies and auxiliaries. For example, when Flaminius' army marched towards the Peloponnesus to engage the Spartan tyrant Nabis (195), it acquired 10,000 Achaean infantry and 1,000 cavalry as auxiliaries. Shortly after, 1,500 Macedonians and 400 Thessalian cavalry joined the Roman force. Flaminius' force contained some 1,400 auxiliary cavalry, not including any Numidian contingent that may have been present, but only 600 citizen cavalry at most and perhaps 1,200 allied cavalry.⁴⁶

These various advantages made auxiliary cavalry a seemingly fair replacement for citizen cavalry, and auxiliaries had normally provided the bulk of Rome's cavalry for some time. The benefits of auxiliary cavalry alone, however, cannot explain the failure to reinstate citizen cavalry after the Social War. If auxiliary cavalry were so clearly advantageous, it would be very difficult to explain why the Romans did not abolish the citizen cavalry and rely exclusively on auxiliary cavalry long before the first century. Furthermore, the various advantages of auxiliary cavalry could be gained without eliminating the citizen cavalry. Indeed, auxiliaries could not offer the one overwhelming advantage of citizen cavalry. The citizen cavalry was a distinguished military group providing Roman generals with a solid core of loyal young members of the socio-political elite who could serve as additional sources of leadership in the army. These young men attended the briefings of the general alongside the officers⁴⁷ and served as additional agents to implement the general's commands. The night-watch duties assigned to the cavalry are a clear illustration. The citizen cavalry inspected the infantry sentries and reported any who failed to perform their duties.⁴⁸ We can reasonably speculate that the citizen cavalry served as aides to the commander in other important ways as well. At the battle of the Ticinus, for example, the consul P. Scipio placed his son in charge of a picked cavalry troop to ensure his safety; surely Scipio would not have entrusted the life of his son to Gallic cavalry when there were plenty of citizen cavalry about.⁴⁹ The auxiliaries were foreigners with less of a stake in furthering Rome's agenda, and no competent Roman general could afford to presume they would remain unfailingly loyal to the Roman cause. After the defeat at the Ticinus, the

Gallic auxiliaries slaughtered many of the Romans in camp and defected to Hannibal.⁵⁰ Caesar's refusal to entrust his life to a contingent of Gallic cavalry is well known.⁵¹ Clearly, the Romans could not easily replace the citizen cavalymen with auxiliary cavalymen in trusted leadership positions. This explains, for the most part, why the Romans did not rely exclusively on auxiliary cavalry until the very end of the Republic. It also means the availability of auxiliary cavalry, though a factor in the failure to reinstate the citizen cavalry, is only part of the explanation.

The grant of citizenship to all Italy may have played a part. The citizen cavalry corps had always been an elite group, consisting of young citizens who were in some ways partners with the officers. Once all Italy received Roman citizenship, the elite citizen cavalry would have been thrown open to a host of new citizens. In the immediate aftermath of the Social War, this may have been a very unpalatable proposal to the Roman Senate. We know that the Senate wished to neutralize the political power of the new Italian citizens in any way possible; hence the struggle to limit the enrolment of the new citizens to four tribes and the persistent prejudice against the new man in politics.⁵² In this climate it would not be surprising if the Romans did not want the Italian elite to serve as citizen cavalry. Not only was the citizen cavalry an elite force but also cavalry service was an important source of prestige that could be converted into votes in the assembly, or simply confirm an individual's high status.⁵³ Roman aristocrats wished to limit the political power of the Italians. Whatever their exact fears were, the aristocrats would not likely have relished the prospect of allowing the Italians into the citizen cavalry, thereby giving them access to an important source of prestige and potential political power.

Perhaps some of the responsibility lies with Sulla and his reorganization of the state. If Sulla had felt a pressing need to reinstall the citizen cavalry, he would have done so. It is unlikely the lack of citizen cavalry concerned him at all. As a *propraetor* in Asia Minor in 96, he had acquired all the forces he needed from auxiliaries – a precedent that started before his tenure there, and lasted long after.⁵⁴ When Sulla fought Mithridates and the Marians, he had no citizen cavalry corps. Any Roman troopers with him were few. They could have fulfilled leadership roles or served as a bodyguard, perhaps, but done little unaided on the battlefield. Sulla need have had no fear that without contingents of citizen cavalry, the army would lack equestrians to fill necessary leadership roles. Equestrians, as we shall see, continued to serve in the army as officers, aides, and

observers even after the disbanding of the citizen cavalry. In short, Sulla would have had little need to reinstall the citizen cavalry.

Whatever the exact combination of factors discouraging the re-instatement of the citizen cavalry, the disappearance of citizen cavalry did not in any way mark the end of equestrian service in the army. Men of equestrian rank clearly continued to serve. The exact nature of this service has been a matter of considerable debate. Gelzer and Hill suggested that all of these *equites* served as officers, either tribunes or prefects.⁵⁵ Nicolet, on the other hand, strongly asserted that young men from the equestrian class served as "simple soldiers" in the ranks of the late Republican legions. We cannot rule out the possibility that individual men of equestrian rank served as ordinary infantry. There are strong grounds, however, for supposing that equestrians in the army were not part of the infantry. The issue is not whether men of equestrian rank would or could fight on foot because we know that the cavalry of the middle Republic often fought on foot, and even generals could fight on foot. Indeed, I have proposed that the cavalry class fought in the legions during the Social War. The Social War, however, was hardly a normal situation. Furthermore, when the cavalry of the middle Republic fought on foot, they were still members of the cavalry class and, therefore, not infantry. To be in the infantry was to be in a lower social rank. According to Frontinus, the consul Q. Metellus (cos. 149 or 109?) could have kept his son alongside him as a *contubernalis* but preferred to have him serve in the ranks.⁵⁶ The consul P. Rutilius (105) likewise preferred to make his son a soldier in the legion rather than his privileged tent-mate.⁵⁷ Frontinus included both of these episodes under the heading of "discipline," and he clearly believed service in the infantry was a form of discipline or punishment for young men of equestrian rank.⁵⁸

The Romans clearly recognized equestrian service as a special form of service even after the disappearance of the citizen cavalry. Cicero asserted service on horseback (*equo merere*) was more honorable than service as a centurion.⁵⁹ Caesar referred to Roman *equites* in his army several times, even though he did not use these men as a cavalry force in combat.⁶⁰ Caesar's *Lex Julia Municipalis* clearly distinguishes between service in the legion on horse and service on foot, giving greater weight to the former. One had only to serve half the time on horse that he would have to serve on foot to bypass the age restrictions for municipal office. There is no warrant to suppose that service on horse was merely nominal and that an equestrian soldier in fact served in the legions. There is

no warrant to interpret this law in any way other than what it says: some citizens served on horse and others served on foot.

Without a citizen cavalry contingent, however, what did it mean to serve with a horse? Perhaps those equestrians who were not officers served in the capacity of *contubernales*, members of the general's entourage and honor guard.⁶¹ This was likely often the case. As a raw recruit (*tiro*) during the Social War, Cicero was present at important negotiations with the Italian commander Scato that took place between the Roman and Italian camps. Unless we suppose the entire army was present at these negotiations, an extremely unlikely prospect, Cicero must have been at this meeting because he was a privileged member of the general's entourage.⁶² Plancius was *contubernalis* both of A. Torquatus in Africa and then later of Cn. Saturninus before serving as a military tribune in Macedonia.⁶³ Cicero suggested that it was common practice for a young man to serve as a *contubernalis* when recounting the early years of his client M. Caelius.⁶⁴ In the same speech Cicero mentioned that it was common in the days of his youth for a lad entering the military to spend the first years watching and behaving himself, learning the ropes.⁶⁵ This too suggests a form of privileged military service.⁶⁶ It was also a normal practice for a general and his officers to bring friends or political associates with them on campaign. Caesar's legate Q. Titurius brought along with him C. Arpineius, a member of the equestrian class, as a *familiaris*.⁶⁷ There is no reason to suppose Titurius did not have more *familiares* with him. We know Caesar had a significant number of equestrians attached to his army without specific military positions.⁶⁸ Presumably, these men were *familiares* of Caesar or his officers.

Whether as officers, *contubernales*, or *familiares*, the equestrians in the late Republican army essentially served as an additional source of leadership and as an entourage just as the citizen cavalry had. Caesar's memoirs indicate he entrusted a variety of tasks to equestrians. As the situation required, he drew upon a pool of equestrians that accompanied his army. In naval operations against the Bellovaci and Aedui, Caesar placed a Roman *eques* in charge of each river vessel.⁶⁹ C. Arpineius, attached to Caesar's army as a *familiaris* of Q. Titurius, acted as an ambassador to Ambiorix.⁷⁰

Equestrians continued to serve in the army after the disappearance of the citizen cavalry corps. Nevertheless, the end of the citizen cavalry as a tactical arm did mark a real break in the elite military tradition. Equestrians might see combat. While the Republic lasted, however, they no longer did so in large groups as an organized

tactical unit.⁷¹ Indeed, without a tactical corps of citizen cavalry, the equestrians in the army no longer primarily served as a combat force. Furthermore, the numbers of official and unofficial equestrian positions in the army were far too few to encompass the numbers of cavalry that used to accompany the legions. Many elite youths must have lacked any military experience without access to cavalry service. Even more importantly, the *decem stipendia*, the mandatory ten years of military service required of all candidates for public office, clearly had lapsed by the first century. Elite youths were no longer required to serve ten years before holding public office, and many served only a token year or two in the army.⁷² Finally, some equestrians, as the next chapter will demonstrate, clearly came to view military tribunates and prefectures as sources of profit and tools of business, rather than the means to obtain a reputation for *virtus*.

The traditional route to acquire prestige and a reputation through lengthy military service did not completely disappear without citizen cavalry service, but substantial numbers of elite youths ignored this route. The end of the citizen cavalry was not only a product of manpower needs and Roman fears of elite Italians but also a result of changes in the attitudes of elite youths toward military service. Important changes in the relationship between the elite and military service had occurred in the late Republic, changes that we will now explore.

ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF PRESTIGE AND THE END OF CITIZEN CAVALRY SERVICE

In the late fourth and early third century, cavalry service was well suited to a Roman warrior elite living in a relatively simple economy. Coinage was scarce and the amount of landed wealth possessed by the wealthiest Romans appears to have been relatively modest compared to the property controlled by Romans in the first century. The population of Rome and other urban centers in Italy cannot have been large, and these cities definitely did not provide the markets for surplus agriculture that they would in the late second century. Market agriculture, without a developed urban market, did not exist on a large scale. Advocacy was an important component of the relationship between Roman patrons and clients, but the demand for advocates was relatively low compared to the demands of the late second and first century. The markers of elite status and the bases of aristocratic competition were very limited in the early third century. Landed wealth was the essential criterion of elite status, and aristocratic ancestry was the primary criterion for the right to hold office.

Cavalry service was well suited to the values and lifestyle of this early third century elite. It occupied young men in a productive and valued pursuit at a time of their lives when there was often little else to occupy them. The period between the beginning of adulthood in the mid-teens – marked by the assumption of the *toga virilis* – and the time of eligibility for office or assumption of property and a household was potentially empty for a youth. There was no need for those whose fathers were still alive to labor or oversee the activities of agricultural estates; even young men who had already inher-

ited their father's estates did not necessarily need to devote a great deal of time to supervising agricultural production. Before the development of large-scale market agriculture, an estate owner could, if he chose, easily entrust the growing of staple crops of grain to his *vilicus*.¹ Most elite youths would not marry until their late twenties, and many did not marry until past thirty.² Financial opportunities were limited and education in a rudimentary state in the third century.

In this society cavalry service provided a productive and valued occupation for elite youths. Warfare was a consistent part of Roman life in the middle Republic. Every year, almost without exception, the Romans waged war defending their territory, acquiring land to distribute to landless citizens, or expanding their hegemony over their neighbors.³ Because war was so fundamentally important to the continued existence and prosperity of the Republic, the Romans particularly valued those who contributed to the war effort. Cavalry service was valued because it contributed directly to Roman military success. A youth might accrue benefits from active service as well. He could establish connections with his peers and superiors in the social elite.⁴ He also had the opportunity to earn a reputation for military courage and skill that could later translate into political success in Roman or municipal elections. Even those members of the elite who had no overtly political aspirations were not immune to the benefits of a military reputation. Members of an elite that placed great value upon *virtus* could also reap the social benefits of a distinguished stint of cavalry service: respect, deference, and authority.

Roman society was not static. The second century brought great economic and social changes to Roman society, gradual to develop, but profound in their effects. The domination of the Mediterranean, in particular, spurred important economic and social changes in Roman Italy. If the wars of the fourth century had obviated the need for Roman aristocrats to pay intense attention to their own farms and allowed them to spend more time involved in public affairs,⁵ the wars of the second century made these aristocrats fabulously rich and also brought opportunities for profit to a much larger segment of Roman society. Wealth flowed into Italy from the conquered peoples of the Mediterranean. The opportunities for individuals to profit through tax farming and provincial administration grew. Elite Romans invested much of their profits in land, and the size of their holdings in Italy grew dramatically.⁶ Urban populations also grew in Italy in no insignificant part because of

the increasing numbers of slaves acquired through war. Rome and other growing Italian cities provided substantial markets not only for grain but also for many new kinds of luxury agricultural produce. As the administrative needs of Rome grew, so did the courts and the demand for legal advocates. In this environment monetary wealth and skill as an advocate became increasingly important means for acquiring a reputation. Alternative socially acceptable occupations came to compete with cavalry service for a youth's free time. Roman youths could have continued to serve in the cavalry as they followed these other pursuits, but the very value of serving as a common cavalry trooper waned gradually, but definitively. Cavalry service had lost much of its purpose for members of the elite, and so most were likely quite content to watch it disappear.

By the first century we can see noticeable changes in the elite tradition of military service. Throughout the middle Republic every member of the cavalry class could be required to serve a maximum of ten campaigns, though the actual amount of service for most was probably far less onerous.⁷ Our evidence indicates this maximum requirement of ten years – whether embodied in law or custom – held binding force until at least the late second century. According to Livy, the censors of 209 punished the cavalry troopers that survived Cannae by refusing to reckon any of their previous military service toward their total liability. They were required to serve ten additional campaigns with their own horses.⁸ Polybius stated that the Romans required a maximum of ten years service from cavalrymen in his day.⁹ Finally, Plutarch recorded C. Gracchus' boast that he had personally served twelve years in the military when other men were only obliged to serve for ten years.¹⁰

Polybius further asserted that a Roman had to complete ten years of military service, the *decem stipendia*, before holding office.¹¹ It is probably no coincidence that this term of military service matched the maximum service required from cavalry:¹² political office was the preserve of the cavalry class,¹³ and someone hoping to hold office first had to serve the state. Ten years of actual service, or at least ten separate campaigns, were required while the rule lasted, as opposed to simply ten years of attendance at the levy as Mommsen thought.¹⁴ Certainly this is what Polybius said, and the requirements for holding municipal office in Heraclea, which also refer to actual time served in the army, support his claim.¹⁵ There is no compelling reason to doubt Polybius.

In the first century, however, the *decem stipendia* clearly had lapsed. Elite youths seeking political office were no longer required

to serve ten years, and many served no more than a token year or two in the army. Nor, apparently, were those youths who did not pursue a political career required to serve in the military.¹⁶ For some individuals, no doubt, cavalry service had never been particularly popular. P. Aebutius, for example, earned exemption from cavalry service as a reward for helping uncover the Bacchanalian conspiracy.¹⁷ The *lex Acilia* of C. Gracchus also offered exemption from citizen or allied military service to those who successfully prosecuted a Roman for *repetundae*.¹⁸ These instances suggest some, at least, deemed exemption from military service to be very attractive. Some youths will have welcomed the end of cavalry service and the risks and burdens it entailed. Furthermore, it is entirely possible that a number of elite youths who did not aspire to hold political office never served in the cavalry at all. Again, this does not explain how an elite driven to acquire prestige and confirm its status could give up completely on cavalry service. In a society that had traditionally placed such high value on military achievements, few members of the elite could have been immune to the advantages of cavalry service for acquiring prestige and confirming status. This was particularly true for those Romans who entertained political aspirations, but also true for the municipal elite. The question, then, is not how individuals could give up the experience of fighting in the cavalry, rather we should like to know how the elite could afford to give up this important vehicle for a political career and this gauge of status. How did an aristocrat identify himself, carve out a reputation, or confirm one without cavalry service? How did other members of the elite, also sensitive to maintaining their status, mark their status without cavalry service? What other ways to gain prestige existed apart from military service, and what effect did the availability of these alternate sources of elite status have upon the appeal of cavalry service?

Roman aristocrats did not simply stop competing with one another for offices and honor once cavalry service ended. Nor did they cease to rank themselves and their peers in a social hierarchy. If anything, the competition between aristocrats was even more intense in the last century of the Republic; the influx of new competitors from the newly enfranchised Italians only intensified political competition. For it to have been acceptable for young Romans to give up cavalry service and the opportunity to establish their reputations, other sources of prestige and marks of high status must have substituted for cavalry service. Similarly, the rest of the elite did not suddenly lose interest in defining themselves and confirming their

high status in the aftermath of cavalry service; they too must have found ways to mark themselves as members of the elite. In this final chapter we will consider some of the ways in which the first century elite acquired prestige and confirmed status, if not political power, outside of cavalry service. We will see that the criteria for elite status evolved and broadened between the third and first centuries. The nature of the changes was quite gradual but still important. In the early third century, cavalry service was a primary source of prestige for an elite that had a very limited set of markers for high status. By the first century alternative identifiers of high status had developed, most important among them skill in forensic oratory and possession of great wealth, especially money. Cavalry service had become less attractive and less honorific. Elite culture had changed sufficiently so that the members of the elite now viewed cavalry service as superfluous to their identity and lifestyle.

THE GROWING IMPORTANCE OF ADVOCACY AND ORATORY

The idea that a young man could attain a reputation for oratory and advocacy was not a late Republican innovation. Advocacy, speaking on an individual's behalf in a court of law, was an integral part of the Roman system of patronage. One of the most important services a Roman patron could lend his client was to represent his interests in a Roman court. A Roman might also serve as an advocate for a *hospes*, a guest friend.¹⁹ Advocacy must have been a well-established practice by the end of the third century because the *lex Cincia* (204) prohibited paying advocates for their services.²⁰ In the late third century, the elder Cato served as an advocate to all in need in the towns and villages near Rome, practicing his oratory and developing a reputation as an effective orator.²¹ Oratory in the third century differed from that of the first century in two important aspects. First, third century oratory lacked the substantial academic underpinnings it would later acquire from Greek rhetoric. The field of Latin rhetoric did not exist, and Greek rhetoric was gradually introduced from the middle of the century.²² Second, the rudimentary state of Roman legal institutions largely limited the need for orators and advocates. No standing criminal courts existed, and the number of citizens was relatively small, making the number of civil suits at Rome correspondingly few.

The demand for the advocate's services increased dramatically in the mid-second century and again after the Social War. It is worth noting how Cicero understood the change.

As soon as our domination of all peoples had been established, and enduring peace had secured our leisure, almost every young man desiring fame thought he should pursue oratory with all diligence . . . The magnitude and variety and frequency of all types of law-suits urged them on . . .²³

Besides moral depravity Cicero linked the increase in lawsuits to the creation of the first standing criminal courts (149). He also noted that the services of able advocates became more necessary as a result of the introduction of the secret ballot in public trials (137).²⁴ The role of these two factors in increasing the demand for advocates is clear enough. Extortion was not a crime before the establishment of the *repetundae* court. Henceforth, as Romans were prosecuted for extortion, the demand for advocates and prosecutors would increase. The use of secret ballots, on the other hand, meant the moral pressure of the elite upon the populace diminished in trials held before the popular assembly, and the services of the advocate were more important than ever to persuade the people to convict or acquit.²⁵

After the Social War the demand for advocates must have skyrocketed. The simple fact that the number of citizens had grown dramatically within the space of a few years meant that the number of lawsuits tried in the Roman courts increased markedly.²⁶ Increased numbers of lawsuits strained the Roman court system and generated the demand for more advocates. The simple demand for advocates in the first century was much greater than in the early third century. As advocacy became a more needed and valued occupation in Roman society, elite Roman youths spent more time training to be orators.

The sophistication of rhetorical training increased at the same time as the need for advocates. As noted above, Cato wrote the first manual on Latin oratory. He was famous for promoting a philosophy of practical speaking rather than adopting an academic approach to oratory.²⁷ In the mid-second century, however, the Romans wholeheartedly adopted Greek models for rhetoric, thereby adding a complex academic component to the established practice of advocacy. The adoption of Greek rhetorical theory meant that those who wished to master oratory had to labor not only to master Greek

rhetorical theory, a daunting task requiring much study and memorization, but also to acquire the knowledge of literature, history, and philosophy needed to construct persuasive arguments.²⁸ Besides learning the academic theory, a youth would have to serve a number of apprenticeships, studying at the feet of the established masters of the art. Thus, Cicero first sat at the feet of the learned jurist Scaevola Augur and later studied with the Augur's brother, Scaevola Pontifex.²⁹ M. Caelius Rufus, in turn, sat at the feet of Cicero.³⁰ By the time Cicero's son began his secondary education, the training of an elite youth grew even more elaborate and commonly included a period of study abroad in the Greek East.³¹

The changes in the study and practice of advocacy were quite gradual. The traditional role of the advocate expanded with the introduction of complex rhetorical theory. An advocate of the first century seeking to compete effectively in legal contests had to train, and that training included acquiring a corpus of academic knowledge. The always-valued services of the able advocate were increasingly prized as the scope of litigation and the numbers of potential litigants increased dramatically in the mid-second and early first century. These changes were gradual, but the result, nevertheless, was profound. In the first century the educated elite youth was expected not to join the army but to enter the Forum and learn the art of the advocate. The practice of advocacy and the rewards of success in the courts served as replacements for cavalry service and its benefits. Nor was this true only for the aristocracy; advocacy belonged to the whole of the cavalry class. Atticus studied under Scaevola alongside Cicero. The two sons of C. Aculeio (to my knowledge, neither the sons nor the father ever held political office) studied with Cicero under Crassus. M' Curius was a banker at Patre, an intimate of Atticus, and friend of Cicero ever since Curius had begun to practice advocacy. M. Caelius Rufus was a *novus homo* who devoted himself to the study and practice of oratory before his public career.³² Furthermore, we can see that many of Cicero's colleagues and opponents in the courts were *domi nobiles*: P. Cominius of Spoletium, T. Accius of Pisaurum, Q. Vettius Vettianus of central Italy, Q. and D. Valerius from Sora.³³

For the aspirant to political office, advocacy in some ways provided a very natural replacement for cavalry service. The study of advocacy served as a period of training for a young man. Even if he chose not to plead actively in the courts, as many chose, the young advocate engaged in activities similar to those of the young cavalryman generations before. He attached himself to established and

powerful politicians in the Forum just as, formerly, the young cavalryman could attach himself to his commanders. Furthermore, both the study and practice of oratory – just like cavalry service – were open, in practice, only to the elite. The “litigating class” itself extended beyond the cavalry class during the Republic, but was still limited; it was a mark of status to sue or be sued.³⁴ If the litigating class was socially limited, the pool of advocates was more so; only young men of sufficient wealth and standing could afford to spend years studying and practicing oratory. It is also likely that only elite youths could find established lawyers and jurists willing to accept them as pupils.

Oratory and advocacy were elite by definition just as cavalry service had been. Advocacy by nature was a competitive practice: a young man pitted himself against other advocates attempting to protect or defame a litigant. A spectacular prosecution brought the young man a reputation for industry and vigor,³⁵ just as, we suspect, cavalry service formerly had. A reputation for oratorical skill could help carry a young Roman through the lower offices by impressing the electorate and ensuring his name was familiar to them.³⁶ In this sense oratory fulfilled very much the same role as cavalry service. Finally, just as cavalry service might prepare a scion of the aristocracy for military command, rhetorical training and practice in the courts could prove vital to a first century politician who sought to persuade the assemblies of the late Republic.³⁷

For the aspiring or established aristocrat, advocacy as a means to acquire a reputation also had some distinct advantages over cavalry service. The advocate ingratiated himself with clients by protecting their interests in court, and these services could potentially translate into future votes. Furthermore, the advocate was continually present at Rome and, therefore, was highly visible to the electorate, whereas the cavalryman’s deeds occurred far away and had to be reported to Rome to have any effect. The proximity of the advocate to the voters could be a potential advantage in electoral contests.³⁸ Finally, the perceived value of distinguishing oneself in battle may have diminished as the social composition of the Roman legions changed.³⁹ As the Roman legions were increasingly composed of poorer men with less individual political power, it may well have seemed less important to an elite youth to distinguish himself in battle in front of this constituency. In the courts, however, the young political aspirant of the first century would be watched by elite Romans as well as a variety of lower ranking individuals. For this reason, too, the political aspirant may have preferred the law courts as a proving ground.

Members of the municipal elite could also profit from a reputation as a skilled advocate. We know that equestrians from central Italy served as advocates in Rome.⁴⁰ Skilled advocates would gain prestige in their home towns for their ability to plead cases at Rome successfully. They could also confirm their positions of leadership in their home towns by aiding local townsmen in lawsuits. This must have been an especially important source of prestige for the local elite after the Social War when all of Italy acquired Roman citizenship. The inhabitants of Italian towns, now full Roman citizens, found that their legal disputes fell under the jurisdiction of the Urban Praetor's court at Rome,⁴¹ and many, no doubt, wanted and needed a skilled advocate to represent them.

In part, the increasing demand for skilled advocates – advocates with skill based upon lengthy and complex training in Greek rhetoric as well as a series of apprenticeships – explains how elite youths could acquire prestige and a reputation without cavalry service. A number of Romans in the late Republic must have believed this sort of academic training and practice of advocacy to be far more important for a youth than a lengthy stint in the military, if only because many Romans followed this road rather than pursuing a military career. The advocate could acquire a reputation and win election to office based on his oratorical ability; those who did not actively seek office at Rome could acquire prestige and enjoy influence as skilled advocates. In a sense, one form of occupation replaced another, and elite Romans increasingly competed, socially and politically, on the basis of their education and oratorical skills. In this light, an additional reason for the Senate's failure to reinstate the citizen cavalry may have been the preoccupation of young Romans with this alternative, extra-military source of prestige. Practicing advocates, so far as we know, were well-born and wealthy young men, the kind most likely to associate with senators. The Senate might well have taken seriously the avocation of these young men and their desire to follow a practical pursuit other than cavalry service.

We must remember, however, that any change had been a gradual one and that oratory never replaced military service in the Roman value-system. The demands of a rhetorical education did not necessarily conflict with the demands of cavalry service. The pursuit of complex theoretical training in oratory and the tradition of speaking in law courts as a youth coexisted with cavalry service for some time. Cato the Elder was both a successful orator and a distinguished cavalryman. Cavalry service continued to be expected

of youth in the mid-second century, a time when it was customary for young men to practice advocacy and oratory, and rhetorical training had grown more complex with the introduction of Greek theory.⁴² Even in the first century, we find the great military men like Caesar and Pompey developed their skills as orators even as they honed their martial abilities.⁴³ If anything, those youths who committed more time to the pursuit of advocacy did so precisely because the end of cavalry service had provided them with more free time that they needed to spend in socially acceptable practices. Still, skill and training in oratory undeniably provided an alternative avenue to prestige and fame for elite youths bent on a political career or seeking to confirm their social status in their home towns.

MONEY AND ELITE STATUS

Two of the most dramatic and profound changes in Roman society from 300 to 50 were the monetization of the Roman economy and the Roman elite's acquisition of staggering amounts of wealth. The Roman elite had always been defined, in part, by wealth, and that wealth was primarily in the form of land. At the end of the fourth century, the alternatives to landed wealth were relatively scarce. Coinage was scarce, and what coins the Romans used were Greek issues until the late fourth or early third century. In this period Rome operated on a relatively simple economy.⁴⁴

The Roman conquest of the Mediterranean brought profound economic changes to this system. The booty of the Mediterranean, both precious materials and slaves, flooded into Rome, and the Roman elite grew staggeringly wealthy from conquests and provincial exploitation. The rapidly growing city of Rome, along with other growing Italian cities, provided thriving markets for staple crops and luxury produce, and by the late second century, market agriculture was a well established source of income and profit. Through these various sources the amount of property and the amount of money the elite controlled rose significantly during the second century. Correspondingly, the scale of expenditure associated with a high-status lifestyle increased significantly. In the late Republic money and other manifestations of liquid wealth grew increasingly important as markers of high status and tools of political competition. The aristocrats spent the greatest amount, competing in grand displays of conspicuous consumption. The other members of the cavalry class,

although they did not spend on the level of the aristocrats, nevertheless relied upon money and conspicuous consumption to mark their status in society.⁴⁵ The possession of, or access to, large sums of money and the ability to engage in extremes of conspicuous consumption with that money served as sources of prestige that replaced cavalry service.

A youth now might devote the time he had once spent in cavalry service pursuing market agriculture or various other financial pursuits. In the third and mid-second centuries, Romans like Sergius and Geminus had relied upon their skills as warriors, their military records, and their honorable battle scars to claim political offices and honors. In the first century proof of honorable service as a common soldier was unimportant for the elite, and displays of great wealth became increasingly important. By the first century an elite Roman's monetary wealth was a far more important factor in his political and social status than any stint of military service as a soldier, and the amount of money associated with the highest social ranks had grown considerably. Hence, it was feasible, and even palatable, to forego lengthy military service as a common cavalry trooper.

The increasing standards of monetary wealth and the importance of conspicuous consumption were products of the greater sources of wealth available to late second and first century Romans. The elite focused upon acquiring wealth by means that had been largely unavailable in early third century. The acquisition of provinces and the resulting opportunity for aristocratic governors to exploit those provinces are important and well-known sources of new wealth, ones that others have discussed more than adequately.⁴⁶ What needs to be considered here are the other sources of monetary income available not only to the aristocracy, but to the rest of the elite: public contracts, tax-farming, and, especially, market agriculture.

The opportunities to profit from public contracts and tax-farming had grown steadily in the second and first century. By the end of the Republic, customs stations in most or all the major Italian and provincial cities collected dues on behalf of publican companies.⁴⁷ The companies of *publicani* also profited from Italian construction contracts. According to Polybius,

Through the whole of Italy a vast number of contracts, which it would not be easy to enumerate, are given out by the censors for the construction and repair of public

buildings, and besides this there are many things which are farmed, such as navigable rivers, harbors, gardens, mines, lands, in fact everything that forms part of the Roman dominion.⁴⁸

As Rome dominated more provinces and acquired more wealth, the opportunities for *publicani* to profit from public contracts increased.

These sources of profit paled significantly, however, in contrast to the financial prospects of tax-farming in Asia. C. Gracchus took the revolutionary step of allowing the *publicani* to collect the main provincial tax in Asia (a tithe on agricultural produce). As Badian has insisted, the financial impact of this move was monumental. Now the *publicani* would regularly collect the Asian taxes, an arrangement that enriched both the tax-farming companies and the state. We do not know the exact amount of the revenue generated by Asia, but we do know that it formed a substantial portion of the HS 200,000,000 that the Roman state regularly collected in provincial taxes before Pompey's conquests. Individuals could reap immense profits: L. Flaccus paid HS 900,000 just to farm the taxes from the city of Tralles.⁴⁹

Another important new source of monetary income in the late Republic was investment agriculture. As long as certain individuals owned enough land to produce agricultural surpluses, there must have been some form of rudimentary commercial agriculture. The wealthy man, who owned far more land than he needed to support him and his family, would necessarily engage in some form of trade to liquidate surplus produce. In the late second century, the city of Rome and other growing Italian towns provided large, ever growing markets,⁵⁰ and the profits from market agriculture increased greatly. The Roman market grew as the Roman population grew, which required food, oil, and wine to support it and demanded a host of luxury products such as field-fowl, snails, vegetables, fish, and honey.⁵¹ The population of Rome rose steadily in the second century for a number of reasons. The great conquests of the second century had generated immense wealth for elite Romans. What part of that wealth they did not invest in land they spent in ostentatious display, personal and public building, and gifts of wheat.⁵² This elite expenditure drew increasing numbers of peasants to Rome. The increasing numbers of slaves at Rome, another product of successful wars, added to the population as well.⁵³ Nor was Rome the only urban market in Italy. Italian towns grew significantly in the first century, and these growing

towns, although much smaller than Rome, created additional markets for grain and luxury produce.⁵⁴

These large urban markets required the development of market agriculture. Again, Roman imperialism played an important part in the process. The domination of the *suburbium* – the 30 kilometer or so radius around Rome – in the fourth century was the first stage. With the acquisition of overseas provinces and the resulting ability of Rome to rely on foreign imports of staple grains, the Italian farmers of the *suburbium* could turn to the production of the non-staple agricultural goods the market demanded. Italian farmers held a monopoly on non-grain food items until the mid-first century A.D. due to their proximity to Italian markets and the underdeveloped state of provincial agriculture.⁵⁵ The export trade in wine was also brisk. Italian farmers had produced wine and exported it from Italy since before the Hannibalic War, but wine production expanded steadily throughout the second century into a widespread and potentially highly profitable enterprise.⁵⁶

A particularly important component of this market agriculture that did not develop until the late second century was *pastio villatica*, the raising of luxury livestock and produce on the villa grounds both for personal pleasure and profit.⁵⁷ According to Varro, whose long life spanned the first century and allowed him to be well informed on many of these changes, chickens were the first animals raised within the villa. Next came enclosures near the villa where animals could be kept for hunting. Along with the hunting enclosures came beehives and the production of honey; then came the freshwater fish ponds stocked with river-fish.⁵⁸ The practice of *pastio villatica* was tied closely to the demands of the urban markets, especially Rome, and limited to the *suburbium*, the zone within which perishable goods could feasibly be transported to the city.⁵⁹

The income that market agriculture could generate was not insignificant. Varro recorded a number of instances when Romans profited handsomely from selling the produce of their estates. Two brothers transformed their inheritance of one *iugerum* into an apiary and received a yearly income of HS 10,000 by selling the honey.⁶⁰ M. Seius received an income of HS 50,000 from the produce of his villa alone. L. Abuccius' villa at Alba generated more than HS 20,000 while his fields brought in under HS 10,000. The trick to maximizing profits from *pastio villatica* was to minimize costs and seize the opportunities presented by the market. So an estate of Varro's aunt brought in HS 60,000 selling field fowl, but Varro asserts that

to bring in such fares regularly required public banquets or other luxurious meals to spark demand.⁶¹

The Romans who profited most from the expanding urban markets were those who had the greatest productive resources and could generate large surpluses; they were the most able to take advantage of market demands. Even so, there was a large group of farmers who were able to profit from market agriculture. Equestrians as well as senators farmed for profit and generated cash incomes by selling their produce. So M. Laenius Strabo of Brundisium not only owned aviaries of field fowl but also had invented a special type of aviary.⁶² Varro remembered the equestrian L. Axius once was offered HS 1,000 per head for his field fowl but refused to sell them for less than HS 1,600.⁶³ The account of the brothers who developed a profitable apiary on one *iugerum* of land⁶⁴ indicates that even those outside the elite were capable of profiting from market agriculture. As Purcell noted, "the archaeological evidence, which attests *pastio villatica* through the remains of numerous fishponds and even the occasional dormouse hutch – peacocks and snails are more difficult to identify on site – shows that this form of investment agriculture was anything but confined to a whimsical coterie."⁶⁵

Conquest, provincial exploitation, tax-farming, market agriculture: these various sources of income flooded Rome with money, money that went primarily into the hands of the elite. It is hardly surprising that elite Romans used this excess wealth as an additional means to distinguish themselves from one another and from the lower classes. Members of the elite remained elite only insofar as they were able to promote criteria of high status that they best met. Therefore, aristocrats used money as a tool of competition. As is well known, an individual aspiring to win office and join the ranks of the late Republican aristocracy faced the prospect of incurring tremendous financial expenses. A cash income – actual coinage – was a vital necessity for the politician in this period.⁶⁶ Gifts of money, meals, or shows to voters were an essential and inescapable part of first century political life, particularly for those who sought the highest offices of praetor and consul.⁶⁷ The magnitude and expense of these gifts and spectacles increased greatly from the middle to the late Republic as aristocrats competed to flaunt their liquid wealth through displays of largesse.⁶⁸ The practice of bribery also seems to have increased in the first century. Not only do we know of many more *ambitus* laws from the period after Sulla, but our ancient authorities suggest bribery was rampant.⁶⁹ The increasing severity

of the legislation aimed at checking bribery suggests that candidates increasingly attempted to bribe their way to electoral success.⁷⁰ This legislation also suggests a concern among aristocrats – how substantial the basis for this concern was we cannot say – that large sums of money gave an unfair advantage to individuals who otherwise should not win electoral contests.

Spectacles and gifts were not the only forms of displaying great wealth. First century aristocratic standards of living were dramatically higher than those of a century before. This can be seen from several angles. The cost of senatorial houses at Rome grew throughout the first century.⁷¹ The increased possession of gold and silver plate among the aristocracy also points to a rise in the standard of living.⁷²

A radical change in the standards of wealth and conspicuous consumption occurred with the creation of luxury villas. Beginning in the early first century, villas not only formed the *loci* of a new form of investment agriculture but also served as displays of conspicuous consumption. The Roman aristocracy began spending large sums of money to build luxury villas. These villas clearly reflected the increasing standard of living and the growing role of ostentatious expenditure in the late Republic.⁷³ They were not simply displays of luxury, however. The outside of a luxury villa was beautiful largely through the careful application of *pastio villatica*. Varro noted that a villa should be both profitable and pleasurable and that the profitable aspects, such as fruit and olive trees, also served to make the grounds of the villa more beautiful.⁷⁴ The luxury villa, therefore, reflected the estate's productive capacities and advertised the estate owner's successful agricultural practices.⁷⁵ The inside of the villa was perhaps less tied to productivity and more to unproductive luxury, insofar as aristocrats often decorated their villas with astronomically expensive objects and sought to display their status through conspicuous consumption.⁷⁶

The aristocracy took the lead in these displays of wealth. The aristocrat operated in the most competitive environment and sought to distinguish himself from his rivals as much as possible. So it was that aristocrats spent the most on conspicuous consumption. This should come as no surprise to those familiar with the aristocracy of the late Republic. We know, however, that the majority of the cavalry class consisted of men who would never, or could never, join the ranks of the Roman aristocracy. Largely, these Romans can be identified as members of the municipal elites. To what extent were these men, elite in their home towns but not members of the

Roman political aristocracy, affected by the rising standards of wealth in Roman society?

The most important consideration here is that the Roman aristocracy was the political subset of a larger, relatively homogeneous socio-economic elite. Roman senators were linked to the rest of the cavalry class by social and economic ties; senators and equestrians could call one another friends in many circumstances.⁷⁷ Aristocrats were the most driven to demonstrate their status through ever-increasing displays of wealth. The rest of the cavalry class, however, was not immune to the increasing standards of wealth. As members of the same socio-economic elite, the equestrians were certainly motivated by concerns of station and *dignitas* just as their senatorial counterparts were.⁷⁸ As wealth flowed into Roman Italy and the standards of wealth increased, equestrians must have felt the drive to display their wealth in ever more grand fashion.

Part of the drive came from the desire to hold local office. The office of *decurio*, a town magistrate, was much sought after. Holding local political office conferred prestige on an individual. The privileges of a local magistracy seem to have been analogous to the privileges of a Roman senator: a stripe on the toga, privileged seating at the theater, banquets funded at public expense. The types of expenses incurred by *decuriones* were also similar to those incurred by Roman senators. It was common to fund expensive gladiatorial games after winning decurial office. Once in office, the decurion might hold public spectacles and perhaps leave legacies for the people. In addition to these expenses, new decurions had to pay entrance fees in Augustus' day and may well have been required to do so in the late Republic.⁷⁹ Of course, the amount of actual expenditure would vary and was definitely much less than the sums Roman aristocrats had to spend. Nevertheless, displays of wealth clearly were important to *decuriones*. Doubtless, those who could spend more on their office often did so to further enhance their prestige.

Beyond overt considerations of political office, many members of the municipal elite would have wished to display their wealth to distinguish themselves in a society where a number of Romans generally had become far richer. We can reasonably speculate that Romans of the cavalry class would own at least one luxurious residence. We know that Trebatius Testa owned a house at Velia once owned by a Papirius, a house he lent to his guest Cicero in 44. Testa's house clearly was a luxurious dwelling.⁸⁰ C. Canius, accord-

ing to Cicero, went to Syracuse for purposes of pleasure and sought to purchase a country house to entertain his friends.⁸¹ These men cannot have been alone among the equestrians. A man like Sex. Roscius from Ameria – who owned property worth HS 6,000,000 and whom Cicero termed the chief man in Ameria due to his birth, lineage, and fortune – must have owned a luxurious residence. He was connected by ties of guest friendship to the noble Metelli, Servilii, and Scipiones.⁸² He could not have maintained such connections and even considered the prospect of interacting socially with such men if he did not live in a sufficiently luxurious style.⁸³ Nor can we expect that an equestrian like C. Rabirius Postumus, one wealthy enough to subsidize the traveling expenses and luxurious retinue of a king, would not advertise his wealth with a luxurious abode. Not all equestrians were as wealthy as Roscius and Rabirius, but, presumably, the less wealthy did not refrain from conspicuous consumption but simply moderated it.⁸⁴ Senator and equestrian alike were members of a common social milieu,⁸⁵ and both knew the financial demands of that milieu.

An important factor in the equestrian drive to acquire cash incomes and display wealth in an increasingly grand fashion was the growing wealth of Romans outside the social elite. As a number of Romans both in and outside the social elite became increasingly wealthy, they sought to acquire greater prestige through their wealth. Some must have felt that money was a highly subversive force in politics. From the aristocracy's perspective bribery allowed rich, but otherwise less suitable, candidates to win electoral contests and gain influence. Certainly the use of money for political ends made some aristocrats uneasy, at least when they themselves were not benefiting. When C. Scribonius Curio was absent from Rome, his freedman Rupa wished to advertise games in Curio's name. Cicero and others prevented Rupa from doing so, and Cicero justified his action to Curio in a letter:

You will more easily secure all political distinctions by means of the blessings bestowed on you by nature, by your enthusiasm, and by your fortune, than by public spectacles; the ability to give them excites no admiration, for it is a sign of wealth, and not of worth.⁸⁶

That Cicero protested too much is clear. He had stated to a jury some years earlier that the effectiveness of games for winning consular elections was well known. He himself had given three sets of games

as *aedile* and still felt compelled to offer games again during his campaign for the consulship. Even after all these games, Cicero's rival Antonius' games dismayed him,⁸⁷ presumably because he feared the splendor of his own would be eclipsed.

Money was not only a factor in electoral contests. Individuals could attempt to buy prestige and a reputation with money. Before 169, freedmen with country estates worth over HS 30,000 were enrolled in rural tribes.⁸⁸ Many in the late Republic were considerably wealthier than this.⁸⁹ Cicero himself included *libertini* as possible *optimates*, referring to them in the same context as municipals and businessmen.⁹⁰ The pretensions of one particular freedman, a baker named Eurysaces, may serve as an illustration of the prestige a Roman might try to acquire with money. The tombs of most wealthy freedmen in the first century were relatively simple and depicted the occupant wearing a toga and surrounded by family. Eurysaces, however, depicted his baking as a service to the state. He located his tomb at a major intersection near the city and had it built to look like a large granary. The tomb of his wife also displayed Eurysaces' great pride in his work.⁹¹ These were large and expensive monuments that must have contributed to Eurysaces' fame – or notoriety. Nor was he the only freedman to use money in an attempt to improve his reputation. At the end of the Republic, we find that sons of wealthy freedmen could acquire equestrian status or even hold public office because of the wealth their fathers had amassed.⁹² As the amount of wealth in Roman society at various levels increased, so did the pressure for those from upper echelons to distinguish themselves through displays of wealth. Senators felt compelled to appear wealthier than equestrians, and equestrians felt compelled to appear wealthier than freedmen. Hence the claim of Crassus that no man was rich unless he could pay a legion from his income.⁹³ Pompey was far richer than Crassus, yet Crassus endeavored to have the reputation of being the richest man at Rome.⁹⁴ He was simply competing for prestige through the medium of money.

In this environment where the social elite was expected to have and display great wealth, and those outside the social elite attempted to use money to acquire prestige and a reputation, cavalry service was far less relevant. First, cavalry service was pitifully unprofitable by elite standards. The pay was negligible, simply a stipend to support oneself and one's horses and servants. Even the bonuses were negligible compared to the wealth that could be acquired through other sources. The highest documented donative from the second century amounted to HS 1,200 per cavalryman, and the average

otherwise was about HS 300.⁹⁵ When we consider that Sulla's sump-tuary law limited the maximum cost of a meal to HS 300,⁹⁶ such donatives must have seemed tiny from the elite's perspective.

It is not surprising, then, that youths no longer compelled to provide cavalry service eagerly moved to pursue financial activities. Our evidence offers some insight into the activities of elite youths during the late Republic. They practiced advocacy in the courts, managed their estates if they had inherited, and involved themselves in money lending or other financial activities. We have already seen that training in oratory and the practice of advocacy occupied the elite. The involvement in financial pursuits is also noteworthy. Elite youths might devote their time to cultivating their estates and profiting from market agriculture. The elder Roscius spent much of his energy tending his estates and bade his son devote himself to estate management.⁹⁷ Granted, the younger Roscius was over forty when his father was murdered,⁹⁸ and it is impossible to know how early in his life he began to take an active hand in estate management. Given the desires of his father that the younger Roscius should succeed him, however, and given the lack of distraction by other pursuits such as cavalry service, it is likely that Roscius began to learn the techniques of villa management at an early age.

Cicero claimed the rural gentry generally wished their sons to pursue agriculture.⁹⁹ In a society where perhaps 50% of elite youths had lost their father by the age of 20, and 70% had lost their father by the age of 30,¹⁰⁰ fathers who wanted their sons to understand fully the precepts and practices of managing estates in a market economy would, presumably, begin involving their sons in estate management early. Depending upon the crops grown, the estate owner might have to spend considerable amounts of time and energy to supervising affairs if he wished to maximize his profits and ensure his income. The number of different estates in a wealthy man's holdings also affected the amount of time he needed to devote to supervising his estates. The property of an elite Roman would not generally consist of one large plantation; rather, it would consist of numerous separate properties. Roscius, for example, owned thirteen farms in Ameria. The task of overseeing so many farms, even though these farms must have operated with some autonomy, could take a great deal of time if the owner wished to maximize his profits.

The complexity and risks of the agriculture practiced was also an important factor. Consider, for example, wine production. The price of wine was subject to extreme fluctuation, labor was required only on a seasonal basis, and costs had to be minimized to maximize

profits or, at least, to sustain losses.¹⁰¹ The concerned estate owner would have wished to devote a considerable amount of time to managing his estate, and as the number of estates multiplied, so did the time commitments. It appears that the owner of an estate normally marketed the produce of the estate himself; this task was not entrusted to the *vilicus*.¹⁰² If an estate owner wanted to get good prices and wished to take advantage of sudden increases in demand, such as Varro mentioned,¹⁰³ he would spend more time supervising his estates. It was ultimately a matter of personal preference. Cicero asserted to one jury that, "each of you also knows many who of their own accord are inspired by zeal for everything connected with agriculture and consider this country life . . . to be most honourable and most agreeable."¹⁰⁴ In the same trial he noted that the men of Roscius' class from the *municipia* thought it most desirable that their sons devote their time to tending their estates.¹⁰⁵ Neither of these claims could have been patently false if Cicero had any hope of persuading his jury. Presumably, involvement in agriculture could be a pleasurable, profitable, and respectable way to spend time for those men not involved in the pursuit of offices and the practice of politics at Rome. If Cicero's characterization was correct, many young members of the elite devoted a considerable amount of time to learning the details of estate management or, if they had received their inheritance, supervising their estates. If anything, the number of young men actively involved in estate management must have been significant since many will have inherited from their fathers while still quite young.¹⁰⁶

The involvement of elite young men in *negotia* (money lending) is also well documented. Once he had been elected quaestor, C. Publicius Malleolus collected as much money as he could before leaving for his province of Asia. He was aware of the opportunities for financiers there and hoped to take advantage of the financial distress of Asia. He invested some of the money in loans but also seems to have involved himself in commerce.¹⁰⁷ M. Junius Brutus is perhaps the most notorious of young money-lenders. That young man lent a large sum of money to the Cappadocian king Ariobarzanes and later pressed Cicero to use his influence as governor of Cilicia to extract money from the impoverished king.¹⁰⁸ Brutus also lent money to Cypriot Salamis at an exorbitant interest rate. When the Salaminians defaulted on the payments, Brutus sent his agent Scaptius to the then-governor of Cilicia, Ap. Claudius. Claudius gave Scaptius the military office of prefect and loaned him a troop of cavalry. Scaptius used his rank and his cavalry

troop to pen the Salaminian senate in its chambers where five senators starved to death.¹⁰⁹

Scaptius is a clear example of the increasing importance of money and wealth to elite status and the corresponding decrease in the importance of a military reputation. He held his military command not out of any hope of earning a military reputation, but solely to conduct business. When Cicero was governor Scaptius again wanted to hold the rank of prefect to continue to harry the Salaminians.¹¹⁰ Cicero refused to give Scaptius a prefecture but suggested in a letter to Atticus that the practice of granting military ranks to Romans conducting business was common.

I told [Scaptius] I never gave these appointments [to military positions] to businessmen, just as I had told you. I explained my rule to Cn. Pompeius when he made a similar request and he approved it, not to mention Torquatus in the case of your friend M. Laenius and many others.¹¹¹

The requests *nobiles* like Pompey and Torquatus made, the suggestion that many others had made similar requests, and the practice of Ap. Claudius suggest the granting of military rank to businessmen was common. Incidentally, Cicero soon caved in to Brutus' demands and gave both Scaptius and a certain L. Gavius prefectures for business purposes.¹¹² The young M. Caelius was, so far as we can tell, not involved in shady financial pursuits as Malleolus, Brutus, and Scaptius were. Nevertheless, Cicero noted that as a *contubernalis* of Q. Pompeius in Africa, Caelius was in a province where his father had business and possessions. Given the reported frequency of using military positions to conduct *negotia*, perhaps Caelius tended to his family's financial concerns while in Africa. Hopefully he was less brutal in his conduct.

Even some equestrians who served in provinces with active wars seem to have sought military rank as a source of wealth rather than glory. Perhaps it is not surprising that some equestrians assumed military posts primarily for financial gain. The military positions filled by equestrians in the late Republic were generally far more lucrative than simple cavalry service had been. It was possible to make fabulous sums by serving on the staff of a successful general, sums that had not been available to ordinary cavalrymen. We recall that the highest known donative paid to individual cavalrymen in the second century was HS 1,200.¹¹³ An officer on the general's staff in the first century could make a great deal more than this. It was clearly a hope

for some young equestrians in the late Republic to profit by serving a general. Trebatius Testa gained a post with Caesar through Cicero's patronage and clearly desired to profit by joining Caesar. It is particularly interesting that though Testa's time with Caesar was clearly deemed military service, Testa seems to have had little or no obligation to see a real battle.¹¹⁴ On the contrary, Caesar seems to have valued Testa primarily as a lawyer.¹¹⁵ Surely there must have been other equestrians like Testa, who sought a military post more as an opportunity to acquire riches rather than as a vehicle to win a reputation for *virtus*.¹¹⁶ Even the aristocrat Q. Cicero, who served as a legate, commanded legions for Caesar,¹¹⁷ and certainly appreciated the advantages of a military reputation, expected to acquire riches from his military service.¹¹⁸

Cavalry service, service as a simple soldier, was increasingly irrelevant to an elite whose members needed to distinguish themselves continually from one another and from the lower ranks of society and used money as one of the primary sources of distinction. We have noted that cavalry service may have been unattractive to some. The burdens of military service may have been less than desirable. We have also considered that cavalry service was very unprofitable. From a social perspective, too, there was little a first-century youth could gain from cavalry service that he could not gain from other pursuits. Through advocacy, financing, profit farming, and service as a *contubernalis*, one could gain social and political contacts, a reputation, social deference, and political office.

Cavalry service was not incompatible with these alternative pursuits and markers of status. Military achievement continued to be prized at Rome, and military language and metaphors remained an important part of elite identity.¹¹⁹ Nor can the increasing importance of wealth be completely separated from military achievement: Pompey, after all, acquired his phenomenal wealth through warfare. But there was a qualitative difference between the military service of the middle and late Republic. The cavalry trooper, however prestigious his position in relation to the infantry, was still a common soldier. There was a great difference in status between the role of a commander or officer and the role of common cavalry trooper. We have noted that equestrians were no longer required to perform lengthy military service. Those elite Romans who hoped to earn distinction or profit from military affairs still could do so – and many did. It is instructive, however, that they did so not as simple cavalry troopers, but as generals, officers, or privileged *contubernales* and *familiares* of the army staff.¹²⁰ In these positions they

enjoyed a close connection with the command staff of the army and could hope to build important social and political contacts. Equally, if not more important, members of a general's staff and their friends could grow rich from war-booty in ways simple cavalry troopers never could. What military service equestrians did perform generally had become much more honorific and much more profitable.

The Roman aristocracy in the first century came to identify itself by a set of criteria expanded from that of the third century. The Roman aristocrat defined himself and claimed his right to high status through means largely unavailable to the aristocrat of the early third century. The core criteria for membership in the elite remained the same. Land continued to be the bedrock of a rich man's wealth, and an aristocratic pedigree remained a dominant source of prestige and a means to acquire offices. Now, though, the aristocrat could acquire a reputation and confirm his status through advocacy, and he required much larger amounts of money to win elections and compete successfully with his rivals. As the criteria for aristocratic status expanded in these ways, service as a simple cavalry trooper became increasingly less necessary as a marker of status. For those who did not wish or did not need to join the officer-corps, wealth, education, and oratorical ability were not only sufficient confirmation of high status, but the pursuit of these qualities occupied the elite just as cavalry service formerly had. When citizen cavalry service disappeared, it likely did so without a hint of protest.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the middle Republic cavalry service was a mark of honor and a source of prestige for the Roman elite. The *equites equo publico* who supplied the original cavalry were wealthy men who served at the public's expense and enjoyed a position in the prestigious and powerful eighteen voting centuries of the *comitia centuriata*. Among their ranks were senators and other older distinguished men who held their positions in the centuries purely as an honor, long after they had completed their military service requirements. The *equites equis suis* in origin were wealthy men who desired to serve in a distinguished capacity as cavalymen. They offered their service as cavalry, apparently because that form of service seemed fitting for men of their status. The honors attached to cavalry service were many and varied; open only to the wealthy, elevated above the infantry, privileged through festivals, rites, monuments, and legends, cavalry service was an essential component of elite status.

This is not to say that cavalry service was purely honorific and devoid of any actual military obligations. On the contrary, the cavalry could and did play an important role in defeating enemy infantry formations and contributing to Roman victories. We have reviewed the evidence at length and seen that Romans citizens made effective cavalry. In large part the citizen cavalry was effective because of its superb morale. As members of the elite, Roman riders were fully aware of the behavior expected from young men of their station. They were expected to fight bravely and voluntarily subject themselves to risks in battle. These expectations were embodied in the stories of the great monomachists and perpetuated by aristocrats in their speeches. They were reflected in enemy spoils displayed at Roman houses and the public monuments to Roman victories. Roman youths must have been inspired and compelled by these

stories and images. Some might themselves win distinction as monomachists and great warriors in battle. Many more, no doubt, would simply try to earn a reputation for being steadfast and dependable in battle. The reputation they earned could serve them well later in life. In a culture that placed such value on displays of bravery, the elite Roman with a distinguished service record would enjoy more respect from his peers and could legitimately claim the right to receive greater deference from his social subordinates. In all of these aspects, cavalry service was a uniquely elite form of military service and an important means for acquiring prestige and confirming status.

Because of this essential link between cavalry service and social prestige, we cannot consider changes in elite military service in isolation from other components of elite culture and society at large. The end of citizen cavalry service had to have ramifications for the pursuit of prestige and confirmation of status among the Roman elite. Beyond any military considerations, the end of this elite form of military service must have been connected to larger social and cultural changes.

What kinds of larger changes occurred and why? In the larger picture the changes in cavalry service were part and parcel of the general evolution of elite values that took place over the last three centuries of the Republic. One cause of this change was the acquisition of a Mediterranean empire. Historians have long recognized that Roman society underwent tremendous social, cultural, economic, and political changes as a result of centuries of conquests. The standards of wealth for members of the elite rose rapidly as more and more wealth poured into their pockets from conquests, tax-farming, and provincial exploitation. The elite came to dominate increasing amounts of Italian land and profited from that land by operating slave-cultivated, market-oriented farms, farms that produced oil, wine, and luxury goods for Rome and other urban markets. It appears, if anything, the rich had grown richer at Rome while the peasants largely remained at a subsistence level of existence or became landless paupers. In short, the gulf between rich and poor had widened considerably as a result of the wealth from the Empire. Nor was economic growth the only effect the Empire had upon the Roman elite. Increasing contact with Greeks, for example, brought admiration of, and eventually skill in, the components of Greek education and culture. Elite Romans pursued a Greek education, sent their sons abroad to study with master philosophers, and sought to distinguish themselves as *literati*.

An equally important source of change, I think, in elite values and identity was the enfranchisement of Italy. The number of Roman citizens more than doubled as a result of the Social War. This brought many social tensions, including a far greater number of lawsuits which ensured the services of advocates were in greater demand than ever before. From the perspective of the old citizen elite, however, a most pressing matter became how to distinguish oneself in a vastly expanded playing field. It is true that the Roman *nobiles* maintained their lock on the highest offices, but a marked increase in bribery and other forms of political competition reflected the expanded size of the electoral assemblies and the increased number of elite Romans eligible for political office. Even those who did not aspire to political office must have been dismayed at times by the introduction of Italians into the citizen body. Before the Social War, elite Romans could always pride themselves on being citizens of a state that dominated the Mediterranean – not to mention Italy – and belonging to the highest socio-economic stratum of that citizen body. After the Social War, this distinction became diluted as tens of thousands of Italians gained citizenship. If citizen cavalry service had continued to exist it would have lost much of its elite nature. Newly enfranchised Italians would have served alongside Romans whose families had been citizens for centuries.

Social, economic, and political changes over the last three centuries of the Republic affected how the Roman elite viewed themselves and what they valued. We should not overestimate the changes in elite values. The evolution in elite values and identity was very gradual and largely seamless. A fourth century aristocrat would not have found his first century counterpart incomprehensible. Both competed with their peers for offices and honors; both sought to increase their reputations whenever possible; both worked to distinguish themselves from their social subordinates in as many ways as possible. Nevertheless, the elite Romans of the first century faced a set of challenges and problems that their fourth century predecessors did not face to the same degree – not least of all how to distinguish themselves as elite in a society with great monetary wealth and an expanded citizen body. Cavalry service was not an effective means for coping with these problems and it lapsed. This important change in the military sphere was closely connected to social, political, and economic changes. The end of cavalry service was another reflection of the changes in elite values in the late Republic.

It may also be worth considering the effect the changing social composition of the legions may have had on elite attitudes toward cavalry service. Where the army of the middle Republic – both in its soldiers and command structure – had reflected and reinforced the social and political hierarchy of Roman society at large, the army of the late Republic ceased to do so. The legions were no longer filled exclusively with property owners. Perhaps the changes in elite attitudes toward regular military service were partially sparked by the changing social composition of the army. From the perspective of the first century elite, soldiering may have seemed a task fit only for men of lower class and status. The cavalry had always seen itself as superior to the infantry, even in the days when relatively prosperous men served in the heavy infantry. The distinction of cavalry service may well have become meaningless in a late Republican army where even those without property could serve.

The end of the citizen cavalry changed the nature of elite military service in the Republic. Certainly, equestrians continued to serve in command positions. They no longer served as common troopers, however, and while we cannot say they did not contribute to Rome's war efforts, the nature of their contribution was different in the late Republic. During the middle Republic the greatest burden of fighting in the army, *per capita*, had fallen upon the infantry. Still, the cavalry participated in battle, bled and died as did their infantry counterparts. The cavalry class shared the risks of battle. In the armies of the late Republic, however, the heavy burdens of soldiering fell upon the poorest segment of society, where once there had been a more equitable, although not equal, distribution of the risks and labors of battle.

The citizen cavalry in the middle Republic originated with wealthy citizens who wished to perform a form of military service that matched their dignity and served to enhance their prestige. As long as contributing to Rome's war efforts as common troopers was a valid means for elite to acquire prestige and confirm status, cavalry service was a valued institution; but in a society where wealthy men with little or no military service under their belts could attempt to buy a reputation and a Roman of high status was expected to have and display great wealth, service as a common trooper was irrelevant. Military posts came to be valued for their financial prospects in addition to their potential for military glory. At the extreme, some equestrians were concerned only with profiting from military service and simply held their ranks as sinecures. In this environment cavalry service was no longer a necessary compo-

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nent of elite identity. Just as the prestigious nature of cavalry service had caused the first *equites equis suis* to volunteer to be cavalry, the unimportance of cavalry service to elite aims and values in the late Republic ensured that the citizen cavalry corps, once disbanded, would not exist again in the Republic.

APPENDIX 1

DIAGRAMS OF THE BATTLES OF CANNÆ AND ZAMA

The following diagrams provide a basic reconstruction of the battles of Cannæ and Zama. They are intended only to help the reader visualize the flow of the battles and the role of the cavalry in each battle. Therefore, considerations of scale and some of the finer details of each battle have been omitted. I guide those readers concerned with such details to the diagrams of Cannæ and Zama depicted on pages 120 and 121 of John Warry's *Warfare in the Classical World*.

The Battle of Cannae

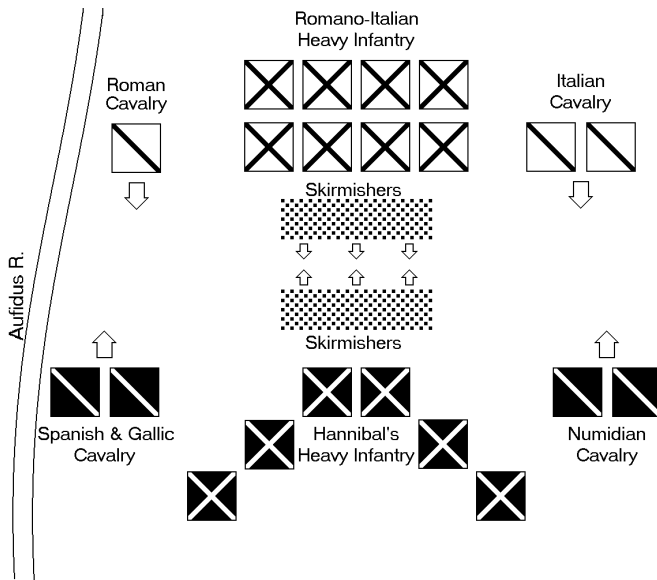


Figure A1.1 Battle of Cannae, stage 1

1. The Roman army and Hannibal's army deploy along the Aufidus River. Roman and Carthaginian skirmishers open the battle. Soon, the Roman cavalry engages the Spanish and Gallic cavalry on Hannibal's left. Presumably, at this time the Italian cavalry also engages the Numidian cavalry on Hannibal's right.
2. The Roman cavalry suffers severe losses and the survivors flee along the river bank. Hasdrubal wheels the Spanish and Gallic cavalry and rides to support the Numidian cavalry on Hannibal's right. Meanwhile, the Roman infantry is steadily driving back the center of Hannibal's battle line.
3. The Roman infantry pushes Hannibal's center too far in; Hannibal's African infantry stationed on the outside edges of the Carthaginian battle line now outflanks the Roman battle line. The African infantry attacks the flanks of the Roman infantry. Meanwhile, Hasdrubal finds that the Numidians have effectively driven off the Italian cavalry. He wheels his Spanish and Gallic cavalry again, this time to attack the rear of the Roman battle line. The Roman infantry formations compress and finally collapse under the combined front, flank, and rear attacks by the Carthaginians.

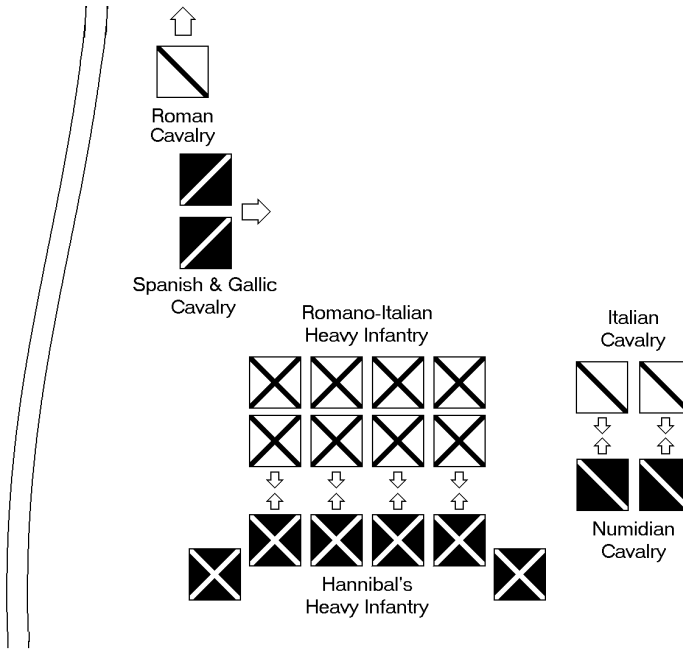


Figure A1.2 Battle of Cannae, stage 2

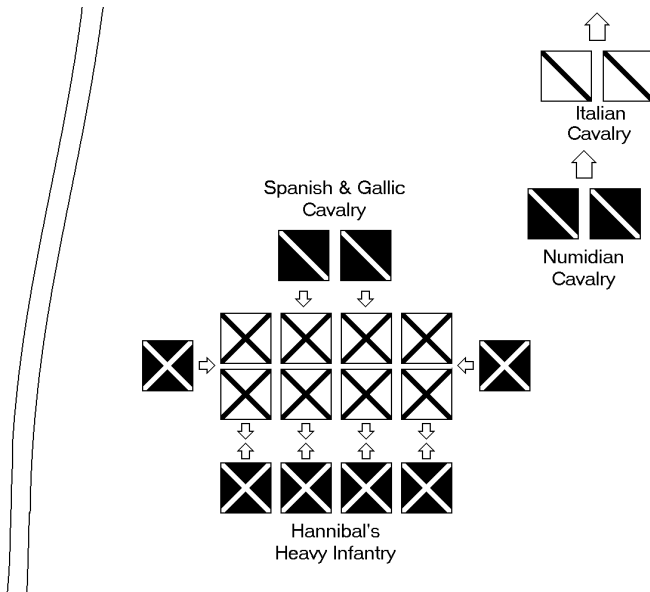


Figure A1.3 Battle of Cannae, stage 3

The Battle of Zama

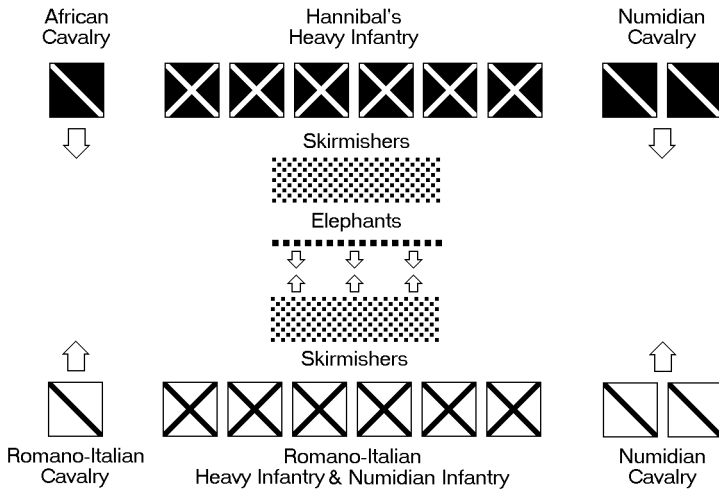


Figure A1.4 Battle of Zama, stage 1

1. Hannibal's Numidian cavalry and the Numidian cavalry of King Masinissa in Scipio's army skirmish at the start. Hannibal sends in his elephants: some panic and disrupt his Numidian cavalry, while others attack the Roman skirmishers. The elephants inflict heavy casualties on the skirmishers. Those elephants that make it to the Roman heavy infantry pass harmlessly through the gaps placed between the maniples. The elephants cause considerable confusion. C. Laelius, the commander of the Romano-Italian cavalry, seizes the opportunity to charge the African cavalry.
2. Laelius and Masinissa's cavalry forces drive off their opponents. Meanwhile, the Roman and Carthaginian heavy infantry engage. The battle remains undecided for some time.
3. The Romano-Italian cavalry and Numidian auxiliaries break off pursuit of their fleeing opponents, wheel about, and return to attack the Carthaginian rear. The Carthaginian forces break under the combined front and rear assault.

APPENDIX 1

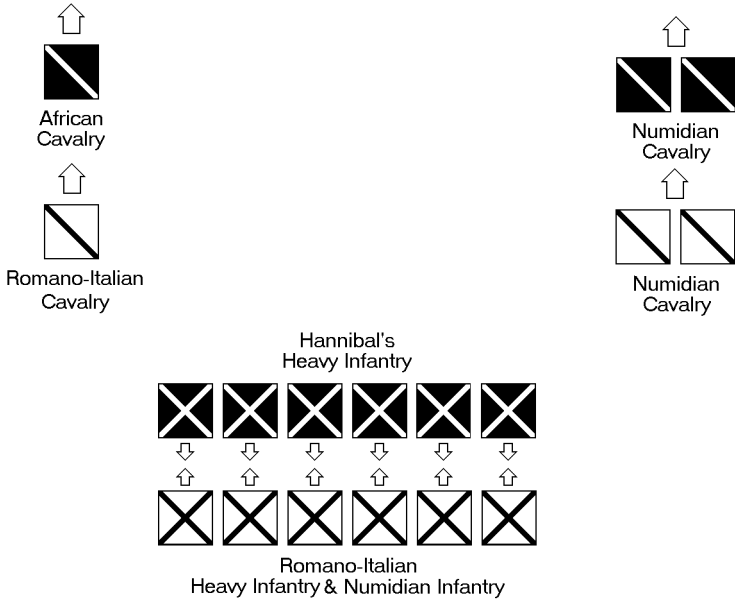


Figure A1.5 Battle of Zama, stage 2

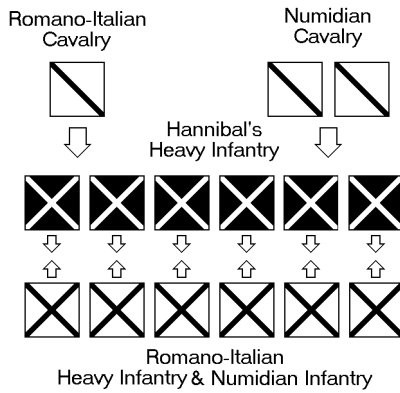


Figure A1.6 Battle of Zama, stage 3

APPENDIX 2

ROMAN CAVALRY FORMATIONS

Some considerations

The smallest unit of the citizen cavalry was the *decurio*, a unit of ten men including the *decurio* (commanding officer) and the *optio* (rear officer). Because the officers served as guides for the maneuvering unit, there were likely only two basic formations for a *decurio*: (a) line or (b) column. These formations are shown in figure A2.1.

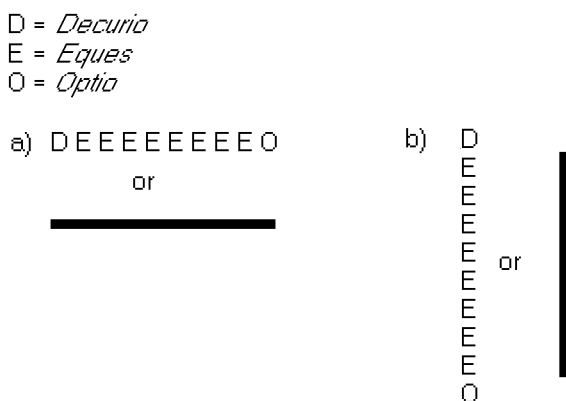


Figure A2.1 Roman cavalry in line and column.

Three *decuriones* made up a *turma*, a squad of thirty cavalry troopers. If the cavalry was to ride and maneuver in an orderly fashion, there were four possible formations for the *turma*: (a) line, (b) column, (c) extended line, (d) extended column. These formations are shown in figure A2.2.

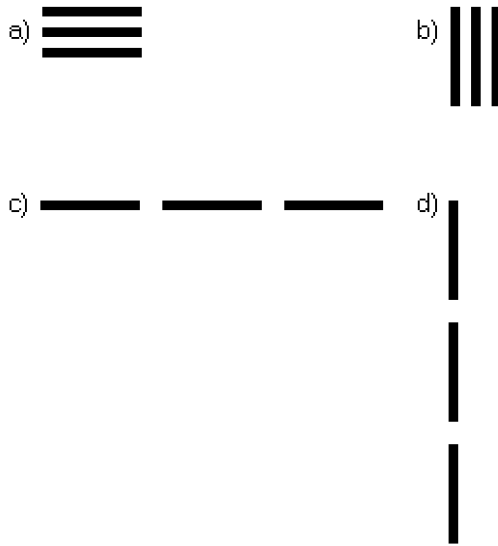


Figure A2.2 *Turma* formations.

The *turmae* were then grouped together to form the cavalry contingent. In a citizen contingent of 300 riders there were ten *turmae*. In a consular army of two legions there were generally 600 citizen cavalry in twenty *turmae*. Before considering some possible formations for the contingent, we must consider the spatial requirements of different formations. An individual cavalry trooper and horse occupied a space at least three feet wide – if packed in knee-to-knee with his comrades – and probably twelve feet deep to allow sufficient space to stop without colliding with other horses.¹ Sufficient space was also needed between each *decurio* and *turma* to prevent collisions and allow for wheels and changes in frontage.

An additional consideration was the maneuverability of the formation. The wider a unit's frontage was, the slower it would have to move to maintain formation. The irregularities of the ground and the deviation of each individual rider would have a greater cumulative effect over a longer line, and the formation would have to dress ranks more often.² Therefore, a cavalry contingent of 600 or more probably rarely, if ever, rode in a line one rider deep. The frontage of that line would be well over 1,800 feet and subject to the individual deviations of 600 troopers. The formation would move incredibly slowly and require near-constant dressing of the ranks. A formation two ranks deep would be better. In this case the frontage

would be more than 900 feet and the leading rank reduced to 300 troopers. With fewer riders in each rank, the formation would be subject to far less individual deviation. I suspect, however, that this was an uncommon formation, if it was ever used at all, simply because the division of each *turma* into three *decuriones* of ten men each would lend itself more naturally to formations with ranks that are multiples of three or ten.

APPENDIX 3

THE SIZE OF THE CAVALRY CLASS AND THE BURDEN OF CAVALRY SERVICE BEFORE THE SOCIAL WAR

To appreciate the light burden of military service required from the cavalry class in the late second century, we need some idea of the size of the cavalry class at that time. We cannot determine this precisely, but it is possible to establish a minimum size. The minimum size for the cavalry class will suffice to indicate what the maximum burden of service for each cavalryman could have been. This will serve to demonstrate the relatively light burden of cavalry service. If, as was almost certainly the case, the actual number of cavalry was larger than our minimum, the maximum burden of military service per individual would be even less than the figures presented here.

We can take 23,000 as a bare minimum for the number of Romans aged 17 and older in the cavalry class of the late second century. Polybius recorded that 23,000 Romans and Campanians were liable for cavalry service in 225.¹ By the end of the second century, the Campanians had been full Roman citizens for some time. If the cavalry class reproduced itself, the number of 23,000 serves as a workable bare minimum for the size of the Roman cavalry class in the late second century.²

If this figure of 23,000 represents all those who could conceivably provide cavalry service, then the age range of that population included everyone of equestrian census (except for the infirm) who was at least 17 years old.³ Presumably, all of these 23,000 were not subject to the levy for practical purposes. The officials in charge of the levy would likely select younger and more fit recruits for cavalry service. Furthermore, those who had already held public

office would likely be passed over for younger men. It seems reasonable to suppose that young men aged, say, 17 to 30, performed the bulk of cavalry service. What we need to know, then, is how many of the 23,000 cavalrymen were between the ages of 17 and 30.

To determine the number of cavalrymen between the ages of 17 and 30, we must first estimate the total population of the cavalry class, that is, estimate how many living males belonged to families with the equestrian census. To do this we need to determine what percentage of the total population of the cavalry class was the group of equestrians aged 17 and older. Using the Coale-Demeny Model Life Table Level 3 West⁴ we can estimate that roughly 39% of the cavalry class would be younger than 17 and, thus, 61% of the cavalry class was 17 or older.⁵ Therefore, if the figure of 23,000 was roughly 61% of the total cavalry class, the cavalry class as a whole numbered roughly 37,700.

With a total male population of 37,700 for the cavalry class – and again we are speculating – we know that about 24% of that population, or roughly 9,000, will be between the ages of 17 and 30, prime recruits for cavalry service.⁶ If I am correct and recruiters preferred younger and more fit men, the greatest burden of cavalry service fell upon these 9,000 young men.

Now we must determine the cavalry needs of the second century. The average number of legions from 167 to 91 was 6.5 legions per year. Citizen cavalry contingents numbered between 200 and 300 cavalry per legion, giving us an average range 1,300–1,950 cavalry needed per year from 167 to 91. On average in any thirteen-year period from 167 to 191, 16,900 to 25,350 citizen cavalry positions were filled. Dividing the number of cavalry positions by the number of prime recruits (9,000) we see that if the burden was shared equally by these young men, each trooper would serve between 1.8 and 2.8 years. This means that, if only those men 17 through 30 provided cavalry service, each could expect, *in general*, to serve no more than three years.⁷ This was an extremely light military burden. For many it must have been even lighter. Consider that any young man who wished to hold public office at Rome would have to serve ten years. For every two men aged 17 to 30 who served ten years in the cavalry, three men could avoid service altogether. Certainly, Romans who were not intending to seek political office could have found cavalry service desirable for any number of reasons: for every one of these men who served six years, another young man could avoid serving altogether.⁸ Ultimately, the burden of cavalry service for the whole of the class was very light.

Any increase in the total population of the cavalry class would only make the maximum burden of service lighter for more individuals. Furthermore, if Mommsen was correct⁹ and the figure Polybius provided for citizen cavalry in 225 referred only to *iuniores* (men aged 17 to 45), the average burden of service would have been even less. As I suspect the cavalry class was significantly larger than 23,000, the length of service was likely very short for most. Again, even with the minimum size we have used, a number of young men could have avoided cavalry service altogether, and many others could have served only a few years.

NOTES

1 CAVALRY SERVICE AND ELITE REPUTATIONS

- 1 All dates are B.C. unless otherwise indicated.
- 2 Citizen horsemen were employed again during the Empire, albeit essentially as scouts and messengers. See also ch. 6 n. 2.
- 3 Some historians have offered the whole thesis (the Romans made poor cavalry, and the Romans replaced their citizen cavalry with auxiliary cavalry because the latter was superior) while others only refer to the poor quality of the Roman and Italian cavalry. As we shall see in chapter 2, none has made any substantial argument to support these assertions. See Cheesman, *The Auxilia of the Roman Imperial Army*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1914, pp. 8–9; Kromayer and Veith, *Heerwesen und Kriegführung der Griechen und Römer*, Munich, Beck, 1928, p. 309; Parker, *The Roman Legions*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1928, p. 43; Adcock, *The Roman Art of War under the Republic*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1940, p. 25; Hill, *The Roman Middle Class in the Republican Period*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1952, pp. 22–6; Kildahl, *Caius Marius*, New York, Twayne, 1968, p. 72; Keppie, *The Making of the Roman Army*, London, Barnes & Noble, 1984, p. 79; Paul, *A Historical Commentary on Sallust's Bellum Jugurthinum*, Liverpool, F. Cairns, 1984, p. 176; Dixon and Southern, *The Roman Cavalry*, London, Batsford, 1992, p. 21. The assertion that Romans were defective as cavalry and the auxiliaries were categorically superior has become quite a truism, reaching into more popular works on the Roman military for a war-gaming audience. See Samuels, “The Reality of Cannae,” *MilMit*, 1990, vol. 47, pp. 13, 15, 21.
- 4 Throughout this work I use “elite” as a social and economic term and “aristocracy” as a political term. The Roman elite was the highest social and economic rank of Roman citizens, equivalent to those who possessed the equestrian census and were members of “the moneyed class” (see Wiseman, *New Men in the Roman Senate 139 B.C.–A.D. 14*, London, Oxford University Press, 1971, pp. 65–94). The Roman aristocracy, without exception, were those Romans who held curule office and, therefore, would normally become members of the senate. The aristocracy was the political subset of the elite. See Hopkins and Burton, “Political Succession in the Late Republic (249–50 B.C.),” in

- K. Hopkins (ed.), *Death and Renewal: Sociological Studies in Roman History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 107–16.
- 5 Rawson, "The Literary Sources for the Pre-Marian Army," *PBSR*, 1971, vol. 39, pp. 13–31, reprinted in *Roman Culture and Society: the Collected Papers of Elizabeth Rawson*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1991, pp. 38–9 (future citations refer to page numbers in the latter).
 - 6 Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 1.1.
 - 7 Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 1.6: Cato himself wrote that he was 17 and first saw military service in the year when Hannibal was at the height of his success and ravaging all Italy. This presumably would mean 217 or, perhaps, 216.
 - 8 We lack good data on the average age of marriage for elite Roman males in the middle Republic. We know, however, that the average age of marriage for elite Roman males in the Empire was somewhere in the late twenties or early thirties (Saller, *Patriarchy, Property and Death in the Roman Family*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 25–41). We must use this information with a good deal of caution. Cato was born *circa* 234. If he was born when his father was 28, his father was born *circa* 262. Likewise, if Cato's father was born when Cato's grandfather was 28, then Cato's grandfather was born *circa* 290; he would have been liable to serve in the cavalry beginning at age 17, roughly in the year 273. We do not know that either Cato or his father were first sons, and, if not, the birth year of Cato's father and/or grandfather might need to be pushed back accordingly. On the other hand, Cato's father or grandfather may have married before the typical age. None of these variables will affect the conclusion: Cato's grandfather served in the first half of the third century, and the Romans did not normally field more than four legions annually at that time.
 - 9 Noted by Gelzer, *The Roman Nobility*, trans. R. Seager, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1969, p. 7 and Nicolet, *L'Ordre équestre à l'époque républicaine (312–42 av J.-C.)*, vol. 1, Paris, E. de Boccard, 1966, p. 54.
 - 10 Liv. 5.7.10: *laudare equites*, 5.7.12: *equiti certus numerus aeris est adsignatus*. See Nicolet, *L'Ordre équestre*, vol. 1, pp. 54–5; Hill, *Roman Middle Class*, pp. 17–18 believed, based on this passage, that service *equis suis* was equivalent to serving with the public horse.
 - 11 Polyb. 6. 20.9, 25.1–11, 28.3, 29.1, 35.8, 39.4.
 - 12 Mommsen, *Römisches Staatsrecht*, vol. 3, Leipzig, S. Hirzel, 1887, pp. 258, 478 n. 2, 499; Meyer, *Römischer Staat und Staatsgedanke*, Zurich, Artemis-Verlag, 1948, pp. 85, 436 n. 91; Gabba, *Republican Rome: the Army and the Allies*, trans. P.J. Cuff, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1976, pp. 53–6; Nicolet, *L'Ordre équestre*, vol. 1, pp. 49–55. Hill, *Roman Middle Class*, pp. 8, 18–19 (*cf.* Hill, "Census Equester," *AJP*, 1939, vol. 60, pp. 357–62) insisted an equestrian census was not instituted until the time of the Gracchi. Hill's arguments against an equestrian census in the third and second century have met very little support and, I think, have been decisively refuted by Gabba and Nicolet. The following discussion essentially reviews the evidence and arguments of these two scholars.
 - 13 Polyb. 2. 24.14.
 - 14 Liv. 27.11.15.

- 15 Asc. in Pis. p. 3, Clark (ed.) (Oxford); see Gabba, *Republican Rome: the Army and the Allies*, pp. 56, 211 n. 30.
- 16 Gabba, *Republican Rome: the Army and the Allies*, p. 56.
- 17 Liv. 34.31.11: *vos a censu equitem, a censu peditem legitis*.
- 18 Polyb. 6.20.9: *πλουτίδην αὐτῶν γεγενημένης ὑπὸ τοῦ τιμητοῦ τῆς ἐκλογῆς*.
- 19 So Gabba, *Republican Rome: the Army and the Allies*, p. 126.
- 20 There is extremely little that is not debated by historians concerning the levy by centuries, the levy by tribes, and the transition from the former to the latter. The latest date proposed for the institution of the tribal levy, however, is in the first half of the third century, the very beginning of the period covered by this study. It makes little difference to my present purpose whether the tribal levy was actually instituted much earlier. See Gabba, *Republican Rome: the Army and the Allies*, pp. 53–6, 126–7; Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome*, London, Routledge, 1995, pp. 179–92.
- 21 Polyb. 6.20.1–9 (Paton translation).
- 22 With the exception, seemingly, of the *velites*, who were the youngest and poorest men. Polyb. 6.21.6–9.
- 23 Gabba, *Republican Rome: the Army and the Allies*, pp. 55, 125–7.
- 24 *Ibid.*
- 25 Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome*, pp. 187–8, 192 has suggested, perhaps correctly, that the tribal levy was instituted at the very end of the fifth century. If this was the case, Livy may have been correct that an equestrian census existed at the end of the fifth century.
- 26 On the problems of the citizenship status of the *municipia*, see Brunt, *Italian Manpower*, London, Oxford University Press, 1971, pp. 16–25, 524–35; Nicolet, *The World of the Citizen in Republican Rome*, trans. P.S. Falla, London, Batsford, 1980, pp. 23–30; cf. Frederiksen, *Campania*, London, British School at Rome, 1984, pp. 191–8, 221–5. I suspect Brunt was correct that *cives sine suffragio* served in the legions, and, thus, the wealthiest *cives sine suffragio* served in the citizen cavalry. We need not resolve this here. We need only remember that the wealthiest Roman citizens supplied citizen cavalry, and that a small number of those citizens came from Roman aristocratic families. Whether the others held full citizenship or only *civitas sine suffragio*, the end result is the same: they were the wealthiest segment of Roman Italy and part of the elite of their local towns.
- 27 A perusal of the prosopography constructed by Nicolet, *L'Ordre équestre*, vol. 2 indicates *equites* generally lived in areas other than Rome. Also note the maps at the end of the volume indicating the geographic distribution of *equites*.
- 28 Nicolet, *L'Ordre équestre*, vol. 1, pp. 55–66. For discussions of the census minimums in the third century, see Rich, "The Supposed Roman Manpower Shortage of the Later Second Century B.C.," *Historia*, 1983, vol. 51, pp. 287–331, especially pp. 309–12; Lo Cascio, "Ancora sui censi minimi delle cinque classe 'serviane'," *Ath. n.s.*, 1988, vol. 76, pp. 273–302; Rathbone, "The Census Qualifications of the Assidui and the Prima Classis," in H. Sancisir-Weerdenberg *et al.* (eds), *De Agricultura. In Memoriam Pieter Willem de Neeve*, Amsterdam, J.C. Gieben, 1993, pp. 121–52.

- 29 Wiseman, *New Men in the Roman Senate*, pp. 67–8; Brunt, *The Fall of the Roman Republic*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1988, pp. 144–8; Nicolet, *L'Ordre équestre*, vol. 1, pp. 470–1.
- 30 Polyb. 6.39.13–15.
- 31 Gelzer, *The Roman Nobility*, p. 7.
- 32 Military rewards: Polyb. 6.39.1–11. Night-watch duties: Polyb. 6.35.8–10. Morning briefings: Polyb. 6.34.5. Donatives: Brunt, *Italian Manpower*, p. 394.
- 33 Liv. 24.18.9; Val. Max. 2.7.4, 15; Frontin. *Str.* 4.1.18, 31.
- 34 Val. Max. 2.9.7. They were subsequently demoted to *aerarii*.
- 35 Dioscurii: Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 6.13.1–3; Plut. *Cor.* 3. Temple to *Fortuna Equestris*: Liv. 40.44.8–9, 42.3.1–2. *Transvectio equitum*: Liv. 9.46.16; Val. Max. 2.2.9; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 6.13.4; *De Vir. Ill.* 32.3; Plin. *HN* 15.19; Tac. *Ann.* 2.83.5; Suet. *Aug.* 38.3; Plut. *Cor.* 3.
- 36 Hill, *Roman Middle Class*, pp. 37–9.
- 37 As did Hill, *Roman Middle Class*, p. 19. Hill himself, however, believed that once a separate equestrian census existed, those who possessed it could only serve in the cavalry or as officers (“Census Equester,” *AJP*, 1939, vol. 60, p. 357). They could not be called on to serve in the infantry. See also Madvig, *Kleine philologische Schriften*, Leipzig, Teubner, 1875, pp. 489–90.
- 38 Polyb. 6.19.2–3.
- 39 Again, Madvig, *Kleine philologische Schriften*, pp. 489–90 asserted this, and Hill concurred.
- 40 Polyb. 6.19.5.
- 41 Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome 327–70 B.C.*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1979, pp. 10–41.
- 42 See Nicolet, “Les *Equites Campani* et leurs représentations figurées,” *MÉFR*, 1962, vol. 74, pp. 463–517 for discussion and plates of Campanian cavalry images. See also Frederiksen, “Campanian Cavalry: a Question of Origins,” *DialArch*, 1968, vol. 2, pp. 5–7.
- 43 Liv. 23.46.11–2.
- 44 Liv. 23.46.12.
- 45 Frederiksen, “Campanian Cavalry: a Question of Origins,” p. 7.
- 46 Especially chapter 5.

2 ASSESSING THE ROMAN CAVALRY'S MILITARY EFFECTIVENESS

- 1 Throughout this work I use “Roman cavalry” loosely to refer to Roman and Italian allied cavalry. From a military perspective there was little difference between citizen and allied cavalry. In those instances where greater precision is required, however, I use the terms “citizen cavalry” and “allied cavalry”. See ch. 4, p. 54.
- 2 Denison, *A History of Cavalry from the Earliest Times with Lessons for the Future*, London, Macmillan & Co., 1913, p. 60.
- 3 Denison, *A History of Cavalry*, pp. 46–57, 60, 73, 83.
- 4 Adcock, *Roman Art of War*, p. 25.
- 5 Kildahl, *Caius Marius*, p. 72.
- 6 Hill, *Roman Middle Class*, pp. 22–6.

- 7 See ch. 1 n. 2.
- 8 Dixon and Southern, *The Roman Cavalry*, p. 21.
- 9 Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War 100 BC–AD 200*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1996, pp. 48–51, 58–60.
- 10 Scholars agree that the close-order infantry contest was the core of Greek, Macedonian, and Roman battles both in the Republic and Empire. Tarn, *Hellenistic Military and Naval Developments*, New York, Biblo & Tannen, 1966, pp. 3–7 stressed the primacy of close-order infantry in Classical Greece. While he believed cavalry became the dominant arm under Alexander and Philip (pp. 11, 26), he conceded even the best cavalry had to have a foundation of steady infantry (p. 18). In any event, Tarn considered the most important use of Alexander's cavalry to have been the breaking of enemy infantry formations (p. 61), and, therefore, considered the defeat of enemy infantry to be the prime condition for victory. Adcock, *The Greek and Macedonian Art of War*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1957, pp. 26–8 followed suit, stressing the importance of the Macedonian phalanx in pinning down enemy infantry so the cavalry could decisively strike the enemy infantry's flanks or rear. In his work on Roman warfare (*Roman Art of War*, pp. 25–6), Adcock clearly stated that the Romans focused on their heavy infantry and the infantry legion was their predominant combat arm. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, vol. 4, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, pp. 1–93 described in great detail the normal model for pitched battles between Greeks. For the classical period he focused exclusively upon the contest between phalanxes. Hanson, *The Western Way of War*, 2nd ed., Berkeley, University of California Press, 2000, also focused upon the clash of phalanxes as the dominant form of warfare in Classical Greece. Culham, "Chance, Command, and Chaos in Ancient Military Engagements," *WfJ*, 1989, vol. 27, pp. 191–205 discussed the role of entropy in Greek and Roman battles. She conceptualized the essence of these battles as contests between close-order infantry formations, using Pritchett's breakdown of skirmish, hand-to-hand combat, and *othismos* as the standard phases of a battle (pp. 197–8). Rosenstein, *Imperatores Victi: Military Defeat and Aristocratic Competition in the Middle and Late Republic*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990, pp. 95–6 stated, "set-piece battles between formations of soldiers on open ground and at close quarters decided the majority of Rome's conflicts," and elaborated on the set-piece battle in terms exclusively applicable to close-order infantry combat: the front line fought while soldiers in rear watched and waited, stepping forward to take the place of those killed in the front. Goldsworthy, *Roman Army at War*, p. 191 asserted the decisive action in most battles in the period 100 B.C.–A.D. 200 was the clash between opposing groups of close-order infantry. Implicit recognition of the dominance of infantry comes from Helbig, "Zur Geschichte des römischen Equitatus. Die Equites als berittene Hopliten," *AbhMünch*, 1905, pp. 267–367 who argued the early Roman cavalry were nothing more than mounted hoplites who rode into battle and dismounted to fight as regular infantry. Meyer, "Das Römische Manipularheer," *Kleine Schriften II*, Halle, M. Niemeyer,

- 1924, pp. 193–329 focused, as his title suggests, almost completely upon the battle between infantry.
- 11 Tarn, *Hellenistic Military and Naval Developments*, p. 61.
 - 12 Adcock, *The Greek and Macedonian Art of War*, pp. 50–1; Markle, “The Macedonian Sarissa, Spear, and Related Armor,” *AJA*, 1977, vol. 81, pp. 323–39; Markle, “Use of the Sarissa by Philip and Alexander of Macedon,” *AJA*, 1978, vol. 82, pp. 484–97; Rahe, “The Annihilation of the Sacred Band at Chaeronea,” *AJA*, 1981, vol. 85, pp. 84–7.
 - 13 Du Picq, “Battle Studies,” *Roots of Strategy Book 2: 3 Military Classics*, Harrisburg, PA, Stackpole, 1987, pp. 65–120.
 - 14 Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, New York, Viking, 1976.
 - 15 Hanson, *The Western Way of War*; cf. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, vol. 4, pp. 1–93, an excellent analysis of Greek battles.
 - 16 Goldsworthy, *Roman Army at War*, pp. 171–286; Goldsworthy, “The *Othismos*, Myths and Heresies: The Nature of Hoplite Battles,” *Whist* 1997, vol. 4, pp. 1–26.
 - 17 Culham, “Chance, Command, and Chaos in Ancient Military Engagements,” pp. 191–205.
 - 18 Goldsworthy, “The *Othismos*, Myths and Heresies: The Nature of Hoplite Battles,” p. 7 argued that the additional ranks in a phalanx were not intended primarily to hold replacements but rather to strengthen the morale of the soldiers in the front rows. I agree with Goldsworthy that the additional ranks of an infantry formation must have increased the morale of the unit, but surely the men in the rear ranks must also have filled holes in the line as they occurred. Zhmodikov, “Roman Republican Heavy Infantrymen in Battle (IV–II Centuries BC),” *Historia*, 2000, vol. 49, pp. 67–78, suggested that the Roman legionaries sometimes used missile weapons throughout a battle and not just before the initial clash of the infantry formations. Zhmodikov’s claims are not strong: few of his examples – as he conceded on p. 70 – clearly refer to prolonged exchanges of missiles. Furthermore, the suggestion that missile weapons might be used in battle after the initial clash of infantry in no way negates the view that infantry combat consisted primarily of hand to hand fighting once the two forces engaged. Much of this is common sense. If the Roman rear ranks threw their missiles against the enemy’s front ranks while the Romans’ front ranks were engaged with that enemy, the rear ranks’ missiles would have had an equally good chance of striking friend or foe.
 - 19 Hanson, *The Western Way of War*, pp. 160–1; Rosenstein, *Imperatores Victi*, pp. 95–6; Sabin, “The Mechanics of Battle in the Second Punic War,” in T. Cornell, B. Rankov, and Sabin (eds), *The Second Punic War: A Reappraisal*, London, Institute of Classical Studies, 1996, pp. 75–6.
 - 20 Hanson, *The Western Way of War*, p. 171 noted the best troops were often placed at the rear to resist any wave of backward motion from jittery hoplites in the middle ranks; Goldsworthy, *Roman Army at War*, p. 178.
 - 21 Rosenstein, *Imperatores Victi*, p. 96; Spence, *The Cavalry of Classical Greece*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1993, pp. 168–9.
 - 22 Hanson, *The Western Way of War*, pp. 177–8.

- 23 Du Picq, "Battle Studies," pp. 123, 125; Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, pp. 70–2; Hanson, *The Western Way of War*, pp. 181–4; Sabin, "The Mechanics of Battle in the Second Punic War," pp. 66–7.
- 24 Rosenstein, *Imperatores Victi*, pp. 95–6; Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, vol. 4, pp. 1–93.
- 25 Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, pp. 95–6.
- 26 Tarn, *Hellenistic Military & Naval Developments*, pp. 62–6.
- 27 Adcock, *The Greek and Macedonian Art of War*, pp. 50–1.
- 28 Rahe, "The Annihilation of the Sacred Band at Chaeroneia," p. 86; Spence, *The Cavalry of Classical Greece*, pp. 103–9; Goldsworthy, *Roman Army at War*, pp. 228–32. Worley, *Hippeis: The Cavalry of Ancient Greece*, Boulder, Westview, 1993, pp. 162–3 argued, "to deny that the charge was ever successful against formed infantry is an overstatement." This is a weak argument at best, and he did not rally effective support. Worley cited U.S. cavalry drill regulations from 1909 to support his claim. These regulations, according to Worley, suggest it was preferable to charge infantry that was exhausted, in retreat, shaken by artillery, and/or out of ammunition. Yet these very factors would make the infantry unprepared to resist a cavalry charge and likely to break before impact. Furthermore, Worley admitted (p. 49) that while a determined cavalry charge could break a phalanx, such a charge would have resulted in high casualties for riders and horses. Worley's objections do not undermine the argument that cavalry did not normally intentionally collide with intact infantry formations: Keegan himself admitted (*The Face of Battle*, p. 96) that collisions must at times have occurred, even though they were irregular occurrences.
- 29 Markle, "The Macedonian Sarissa, Spear, and Related Armor," p. 339. Markle's reconstruction relies on the comment of Arrian (*Tact.* 16.6ff) that Philip's cavalry used a wedge formation and that the wedge formation made it possible, "easily to cut through all enemy formations" (εἰπετώς πᾶσαν τάξιν πολεμίων διακόπτειν). Markle's description is necessarily speculative since no ancient source explains how cavalry might actually penetrate an infantry formation.
- 30 Spence, *The Cavalry of Classical Greece*, p. 108.
- 31 Worley, *Hippeis*, p. 49 suggested there was a chance Archaic Greek cavalry might have broken an intact phalanx with a determined charge, but the riders and horses would have suffered high casualties. Worley believed such casualties would have been unacceptable in the Archaic Greek *poleis* where the *hippeis* were generally members of the ruling class. The Roman cavalry, too, consisted of elite youth, and we may assume the Romans were no more willing to throw away their sons in head-on collisions with the enemy.
- 32 To my mind, Ferrill's arguments in *The Origins of War*, New York, Thames & Hudson, 1985, pp. 198–9 are refuted along with those of Markle. Ferrill asserted that cavalry could force a gap in an infantry formations. However, he conceded great losses to the cavalry force that did attempt to do so. A particular problem with his account is that he did not describe exactly how the cavalry might create a gap

- in an enemy infantry formation. The critique of Markle's arguments also effectively responds to Ferrill.
- 33 Except the Thessalian cavalry, which apparently used a wedge.
- 34 Spence, *The Cavalry of Classical Greece*, pp. 114–16.
- 35 Tarn, *Hellenistic Military and Naval Developments*, p. 66.
- 36 Adcock, *The Greek and Macedonian Art of War*, pp. 26–8; cf. Sekunda and Warry, *Alexander the Great. His Armies and Campaigns 334–323 BC*, London, Osprey, 1998, pp. 68–9.
- 37 This is a truism for cavalry throughout history. See Henderson, *The Science of War*, London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1905, p. 58: “[Cavalry’s] action is thus twofold, protecting and at the same time aggressive; but its immediate enemy being the same in both cases, the enemy’s mounted troops.”
- 38 Spence, *The Cavalry of Classical Greece*, pp. 34–5. Spence’s factors are mobility, weaponry, protection, leadership, training, motivation, flexibility, and size.
- 39 Spence, *The Cavalry of Classical Greece*, pp. 34–120.
- 40 For armament see Sekunda and Warry, *Alexander the Great. His Armies and his Campaigns 334–323 BC*, pp. 20–1.

3 EQUIPMENT AND TACK

- 1 Meyer, “Das Römische Manipularheer,” p. 224 and n. 1; Eadie, “The Development of Roman Mailed Cavalry,” *JRS*, 1967, vol. 57, p. 163; Rawson, “The Literary Sources for the Pre-Marian Army,” p. 45.
- 2 Polyb. 6.25.3–11 (Paton translation, modified by Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, vol. 1, Oxford, Clarendon, 1957, p. 708): ὁ δὲ καθοπλισμός τῶν ἵππεων νῦν μὲν ἐστὶ παραπλήσιος τῷ τῶν Ἑλλήνων· τὸ δὲ παλαιὸν πρῶτον θώρακας οὐκ εἶχον, ἀλλ’ ἐν περιζώμασιν ἐκινδύνευον, ἐξ οὗ πρὸς μὲν τὸ καταβαίνειν καὶ ταχέως ἀναπηδᾶν ἐπὶ τοὺς ἵππους ἐτοίμως διέκειντο καὶ πρακτικῶς, πρὸς δὲ τὰς συμπλοκάς ἐπισφαλῶς εἶχον διὰ τὸ γυμνοὶ κινδυνεύειν. τὰ δὲ δόρατα κατὰ δύο τρόπους ἄπρακτ’ ἦν αὐτοῖς, καθ’ ἃ μὲν ἡ λεπτά καὶ κλαδαρά ποιοῦντες οὔτε τοῦ προτεθέντος ἡδύναντο σκοποῦ στοχάζεσθαι, πρὸ τοῦ τε τὴν ἐπιδορατίδα πρὸς τι προσερεῖσαι, κραδαινόμενα δι’ αὐτῆς τῆς τῶν ἵππων κινήσεως τὰ πλεῖστα συνετρίβετο· πρὸς δὲ τούτοις ἄνευ σαυρωτήρων κατασκευάζοντες μὴ τῇ πρώτῃ διὰ τῆς ἐπιδορατίδος ἐχρῶντο πληγῇ, μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα κλασθέντων λοιπὸν ἦν ἄπρακτ’ αὐτοῖς καὶ μάταια. τὸν γὰρ μὲν θυρεὸν εἶχον ἐκ βοείου δέρματος, τοῖς ὀμφαλωτοῖς ποπάνοις παραπλήσιον τοῖς ἐπὶ τὰς θυσίας ἐπιτιθεμένοις· οἷς οὔτε πρὸς τὰς ἐπιβολὰς ἦν χρῆσθαι διὰ τὸ μὴ στάσιν ἔχειν, ὑπὸ τε τῶν ὄμβρων ἀποδερματούμενοι καὶ μυδιῶντες δύσχρηστοι καὶ πρότερον ἦσαν καὶ νῦν ἔτι γίνονται παντελῶς, διόπερ ἀδοκίμου τῆς χρείας οὕσης, ταχέως μετέλαβον τὴν Ἑλληνικὴν κατασκευὴν τῶν ὀπλῶν, ἐν ἣ τῶν μὲν δόρατων τὴν πρώτῃν εὐθέως τῆς ἐπιδορατίδος πληγὴν εὐστοχον ἅμα καὶ πρακτικὴν γίνεσθαι συμβαίνει, διὰ τὴν κατασκευὴν ἀτρεμοῦς καὶ στασίμου τοῦ δόρατος ὑπάρχοντος, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τὴν ἐκ μεταλήψεως τοῦ σαυρωτήρος χρεῖαν μόνιμον καὶ βίαιον. ὁ δ’ αὐτὸς λόγος καὶ περὶ τῶν θυρεῶν· καὶ γὰρ πρὸς τὰς ἐπιβολὰς καὶ πρὸς τὰς ἐπιθέσεις ἐστηκυῖαν καὶ τεταγμένην ἔχουσι τὴν χρεῖαν. ἃ συνιδόντες ἐμνήσαντο ταχέως· ἀγαθοὶ γὰρ, εἰ καὶ τινες ἕτεροι, μεταλαβεῖν ἔθη καὶ ζηλώσαι τὸ βέλτιον καὶ Ῥωμαῖοι.

- 3 As for whether the cavalry reform took place the way Polybius suggested it, as a result of observing Greek arms, see below, pp. 44–5.
- 4 See pl. 1; Reinach, “La frise du monument de Paul-Émile à Delphes,” *BCH*, 1910, vol. 34, p. 433.
- 5 Liv. 31.34.4; Flor. 1.23.9–10.
- 6 Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 8.67 suggested they did.
- 7 See below, pp. 46–9.
- 8 Lazenby, *Hannibal’s War*, Warminster, Aris & Phillips, 1978, p. 14 suggested that Roman cavalry riders, because they were wealthy men, would never have ridden into battle lightly armed. The tomb paintings of Campanian nobles, which depict their subjects as lightly armed cavalry, are enough to refute this. See Rawson, “The Literary Sources for the Pre-Marian Army,” p. 44. Note also the Esquiline tomb painting reproduced and discussed in Alföldi, *Der frühromische Reiteradel und seine Ehrenabzeichen*, Baden-Baden, Verlag für Kunst und Wissenschaft, 1952, pp. 50–1 and fig. 3.
- 9 See pp. 69–72.
- 10 Polyb. 4.1.3, 4.2.2–4; cf. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, vol. 1, pp. 26–7.
- 11 Salmon, *Samnium and the Samnites*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1967, p. 101; Frederiksen, “The Campanian Cavalry: a Question of Origins,” p. 14.
- 12 Plut. *Pyrr.* 16.4–17.4, 21.5.9; Dion Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 20.1–3.
- 13 Eadie, “The Development of Roman Mailed Cavalry,” p. 163.
- 14 Liv. 31.33.8–11, 31.35.1–7, 31.37.1–7. Livy’s description in the last case is somewhat confusing (and perhaps the account is apocryphal), but it appears the Roman cavalry were out of formation and so had no success against ordered Macedonian skirmishers. The cavalry were rallied by the arrival of infantry cohorts, however, and went on to force back the Macedonians.
- 15 Liv. 37.42.1–3; App. *Syr.* 34.
- 16 The battle at the Callinicus: Liv. 42.58.5–61.11.
- 17 App. *Mac.* 12.1.
- 18 Were these Greeks wearing body armor? It seems likely. Polybius’ whole description of the Roman cavalry transition rests on the generalization that Greek cavalry wore cuirasses. Plut. *Phil.* 6.4 has Philopoemen struggling to march on foot encumbered in a horseman’s cuirass (ἐν ἵππικῷ θώρακι), suggesting, at the very least, the Achaean cavalry wore such armor.
- 19 Briscoe, *A Commentary on Livy Books XXXI–XXXIII*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1973, pp. 1–2, 140.
- 20 Liv. 31.33.8–34.5; Flor. 1.23.9–10.
- 21 Polyb. 9.3.9–4.2.
- 22 Polyb. 2.28.9–11, 30.9.
- 23 Polyb. 2.34.6–9.
- 24 Liv. *Per.* 20; Verg. *Aen.* 6.855–9; Plut. *Marc.* 8.1–5; Val. Max. 3.2.5.
- 25 Polyb. 3.45.1–3; Liv. 21.26.6, 29.1–4.
- 26 Polyb. 3.65.5; Liv. 21.46.5–6. On what “sturdiest” actually meant in this context, see p. 39.
- 27 Polyb. 3.65.7–11; Liv. 21.46.6–10.

- 28 Polyb. 3.65–3.68.10.
- 29 Polyb. 3.69.7–14; Liv. 21.51.9–11.
- 30 Polyb. 3.71.10–74.6; Liv. 21.53.1, 54.4–56.5.
- 31 Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, vol. 1, pp. 435–41 surveyed the scholarly arguments concerning the battle at Cannae and presented a strong case for accepting Polybius' figures. Brunt, *Italian Manpower*, p. 419 n. 2 prefers the smaller figures, however, considering Hannibal's success at Cannae to be inexplicable if the Roman outnumbered the Carthaginians 2:1.
- 32 Polyb. 3.107.9, 113.5.
- 33 Liv. 22.36.2–3.
- 34 Polyb. 3.107.9–15.
- 35 Brunt discussed the evidence for the size of contingents and the ratio of allies to citizens in *Italian Manpower*, pp. 677–86.
- 36 Polyb. 3.113.7, 114.5; Liv. 22.46.2–3, 6.
- 37 The number of Hannibal's cavalry after crossing the Alps: Polyb. 3.56.4; Gauls joined Hannibal after Ticinus: Polyb. 3.66.7, 3.67.1–4.
- 38 Given the figure of roughly 6,000 Spanish and Numidian cavalry and roughly 4,000 Gallic cavalry, I arrive at the following. For the Gallic and Spanish force we have a base figure of 4,000 + S, where 4,000 is the estimated size of the Gallic contingent, and S is the size of the Spanish contingent (I assume the Spanish contingent numbered at least 1,000 – it was sizable enough to warrant mention by Polybius' sources). The Numidian force then numbered 6,000 – S, where 6,000 is the total number of Spanish and Numidian cavalry, and S is the size of the Spanish contingent.
- 39 Polyb. 3.113.1–7; Liv. 22.46.3–4.
- 40 The Spanish and Gallic cavalry was 4,000 + S (see above n. 36), and the Roman cavalry numbered somewhere between 1,200 and 2,400.
- 41 Polyb. 3.113.3–4.
- 42 So Plut. *Fab.* 17 had Aemilius Paulus' horse throw him. Members of the consul's staff dismounted to aid him, and the rest of the cavalry, seeing this, assumed a general order to dismount had been given.
- 43 Liv. 22.47.1–3.
- 44 Polyb. 3.115.4; Liv. 22.47.3.
- 45 Polyb. 3.113.1–116.13; Liv. 22.47.1–49.12. Livy's account is more confused than that of Polybius, but he agreed that the Roman cavalry received heavy casualties and did not hold the flank and that Hasdrubal's Spanish and Gallic cavalry were free to attack the Roman infantry.
- 46 The Numidian cavalry's lack of armor, shields, and bridles was almost legendary, e.g. Sall. *Iug.* 50.2.5, Liv. 35.11.7.
- 47 Rawson, "The Literary Sources for the Pre-Marian Army," p. 45.
- 48 Polyb. 3.65.6: ὁ δ' Ἀνίβας τὴν μὲν κεχαλινωμένην ἵππον καὶ πᾶν τὸ στάσιμον αὐτῆς κατὰ πρόσωπον τάξας ἀπὸ πάντων τοῖς πολεμίοις τοὺς δὲ Νομαδικούς ἱππεῖς ἀφ' ἑκατέρου τοῦ κέρατος ἡτοιμάκει πρὸς κύκλωσιν. (Paton translation).
- 49 Estienne, *Thesaurus Graecae Linguae*, vol. 7, Paris, A. Firmin Didot, 1831–65, pp. 657–8; cf. Liddell, *Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1925, pp. 1633–4.

- 50 Sall. *Iug.* 50.2–5. Liv. 35.11.7: unequipped and unarmed except for javelins. Cf. Liv. 22.48.3, however, where the Numidians reportedly have *loricae*.
- 51 Polyb. 3.116.5.
- 52 Cf. Lazenby, *Hannibal's War*, p. 15.
- 53 For archaeological evidence see Sandars, "The Weapons of the Iberians," *Archaeologia*, 1913, vol. 64, pp. 205–94; Connolly, *Hannibal and the Enemies of Rome*, London, Macdonald Educational, 1978, p. 43; Treviño, *Rome's Enemies: Spanish Armies 218–19 BC*, London, Osprey, 1986, pp. 13–14, 16, 40–1, 43–4.
- 54 Sandars, "The Weapons of the Iberians," p. 282; Polyb. 3.114.4.
- 55 Connolly, *Hannibal and the Enemies of Rome*, p. 43.
- 56 Sandars, "The Weapons of the Iberians," pp. 268–71, 280; Connolly, *Hannibal and the Enemies of Rome*, p. 43; Treviño, *Rome's Enemies: Spanish Armies 218–19 BC*, pp. 22, 36–40.
- 57 Connolly, *Hannibal and the Enemies of Rome*, pp. 56–7, 64–5.
- 58 Consider Xen. *Hell.* 14 as an illustration of the dangers of brittle spears. In battle against the Persians, the Greek cavalry spears broke on the first strike, and the Greeks quickly fled.
- 59 Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, vol. 1, pp. 439–40 provides a concise detailed overview of both Polybius and Livy's various casualty-figures and some of the relevant scholarship. See also Brunt, *Italian Manpower*, p. 419 n.4 for Cannae, and pp. 694–7 on the problems of Roman casualty-figures in general.
- 60 Polyb. 3.116.7–11; cf. Liv. 22.48.1–6 who attributed the successful rear attack, unconvincingly, to a Numidian ruse.
- 61 Liv. 22.49.16–17.
- 62 Polyb. 9.3.9.
- 63 *Ibid.*
- 64 Liv. 8.11.16, 23.46.11–2. See pp. 15–16.
- 65 Polyb. 9.3.6–11, 9.4.1–3.
- 66 Liv. 23.46.11.
- 67 Liv. 26.4.3.
- 68 Liv. 23.46–7.
- 69 Liv. 25.18.1–15.
- 70 Liv. 26.4.4–10.
- 71 Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, vol. 1, pp. 701–2; Rawson, "The Literary Sources for the Pre-Marian Army," p. 57; Oakley, *A Commentary on Livy Books VI–X*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1997, pp. 470–1.
- 72 Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage*, vol. 1, London, Cambridge University Press, 1974, pp. 29–35.
- 73 See pl. 2; Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage*, vol. 1, pp. 155–6, vol. 2, pl. IX, X; Carson, *Principal Coins of the Romans Volume One: The Republic*, London, British Museum, 1978, pp. 24–35; Kent, *Roman Coins*, London, Thames & Hudson, 1978, p. 266 and pl. 8.
- 74 Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 6.13.1–4; Plut. *Cor.* 3.
- 75 Noted by Rawson, "The Literary Sources for the Pre-Marian Army," p. 45.
- 76 Polyb. 11.32.7–33.6; Liv. 28.33.1–17.

- 77 Polyb. 14.8.5–8; Liv. 30.8.1–9.
- 78 Polyb. 15. 9.6–8, 15.11–14.9; Liv. 30.32.11–35.3.
- 79 Connolly, *Greece and Rome at War*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall, 1981, pp. 91–112.
- 80 Polyb. 2.12.4; Liv. 25.24.9, 26.24.1–16.
- 81 Polyb. 18.22.4–5; Liv. 33.7.13. Polybius described the Aetolians at Cynoscephalae as fighting with high spirits and gallantry and said the Aetolian cavalry were superior to the other Greeks at skirmishing and single combat.
- 82 Sandars, “The Weapons of the Iberians,” pp. 268–71. On the shield see Sandars, “The Weapons of the Iberians,” pp. 279–80 and pl. 20; compare these with Polybius’ description of the reformed Roman cavalry shield.
- 83 See pl. 1; Reinach, “La frise du monument de Paul-Émile à Delphes,” p. 433.
- 84 Rawson, “The Literary Sources for the Pre-Marian Army,” p. 45.
- 85 Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, vol. 1, pp. 706, 708: Polyb. 6.23.15 refers to the first class armor as ἀλυσιδωτοὺς . . . θώρακας, “breastplates wrought in chain.”
- 86 See cover photograph; Connolly, *Greece and Rome at War*, p. 234. Keppie, *The Making of the Roman Army*, pp. 223–4 and pl. 3.
- 87 Alföldi, *Der frühbrömische Reiteradel und seine Ehrenabzeichen*, pp. 50–1 and fig. 3.
- 88 As a possible parallel consider Plut. *Phil.* 6.4: Philopoemen jumped off his horse and moved forward on irregular ground. His horseman’s breastplate weighed him down considerably as he marched.
- 89 Hyland, *Equus: The Horse in the Roman World*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1990, p. 116.
- 90 *Ibid.*, p. 117.
- 91 See cover photograph; Keppie, *The Making of the Roman Army*, pp. 223–4 and pl. 3.
- 92 Connolly, *Greece and Rome at War*, pp. 234–5. But see Liv. 28.14.7: *armatus eques frenatos instratosque teneret equos*. Livy may have meant “saddled” by the term *instratos*. If so this may be simple anachronism: by Livy’s day Roman riders may have had saddles.
- 93 Hyland, *Equus*, pp. 130–1.
- 94 *Ibid.*, pp. 117–8.
- 95 Spence, *The Cavalry of Classical Greece*, p. 61 n.108 related a personal communication with an officer who noted all the wounds suffered by the soldiers under his command in Vietnam could have been avoided or rendered less severe if the soldiers had worn their issued helmets and flak jackets. These jackets were uncomfortable, though, and often removed.
- 96 Of course, the troopers might receive scars from weapons piercing their body armor.
- 97 Liv. 31.34.4; cf. Flor. 1.23.9.
- 98 Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 8.67.
- 99 Sandars, “The Weapons of the Iberians,” pp. 231–58.
- 100 Connolly, *Greece and Rome at War*, pp. 92, 98, 107 for Italian curved swords similar or identical to the *falcata*.

- 101 Spence, *The Cavalry of Classical Greece*, pp. 54–5.
- 102 Polyb. 11.22.5–8, 24.1; App. *Iber.* 88.
- 103 In the years 206 and 134, Roman commanders used foreign auxiliaries in Spain to supplement their forces. See Liv. 28.13.1–4, App. *Iber.* 90.
- 104 Liv. 26.4.4–9.
- 105 Liv. 32.35.
- 106 See ch. 4, pp. 127–31.
- 107 Liv. 35.5.8–9.
- 108 Rawson, “The Literary Sources for the Pre-Marian Army,” p. 45.

4 ROMAN CAVALRY TACTICS CIRCA 300–100

- 1 Polyb. 4.2.1–4.
- 2 Polybius’ service as hipparch: Polyb. 28.6.9. Polybius also wrote a treatise, no longer extant, on tactics: Polyb. 9.20.4.
- 3 Walsh, *Livy: His Historical Aims and Methods*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1961, p. 143.
- 4 On Livy’s sources for the fourth decade, see Briscoe, *A Commentary on Livy XXXI–XXXIII*, pp. 1–11.
- 5 See ch. 2, pp. 15–23.
- 6 Liv. 42.7.6–7: *ut equos conscendant ac tribus simul partibus in hostes quanto maximo possent tumultu incurrant. Pars magna equitum mediam traiecit aciem et ad terga pugnantium pervasit. Inde terror iniectus Liguribus; diversi in omnes partes fugerunt.*
- 7 Liv. 27.41.9–42.8; Liv. 27.41.10: *ita pecorum modo incompósitos toto passim se campo fudisse ut sterni obterique priusquam instruantur possint.*
- 8 Liv. 34.14.5–6.
- 9 Polyb. 2.34.6–9; Liv. *Per.* 20; Verg. *Aen.* 6.855–9; Plut. *Marc.* 7.1–8.5; Val. Max. 3.2.5. Plut. *Marc.* 7 mentions Gallic cavalry at Clastidium, but Polybius is silent. If there were Gallic horse at Clastidium, they must have been routed quickly before the contest between Roman cavalry and Gallic infantry occurred.
- 10 See Polyb. 6.25.7 (see pp. 29–30) where Polybius referred to the early Roman cavalry shield as *δυσχερής*. It is a term that suggests a lack of effectiveness, or usefulness.
- 11 Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, vol. 1, p. 210.
- 12 For example, Liv. 40.28.1–6. It is worth noting the Roman infantry defeated the Ligurians single-handedly by bursting from their camp suddenly and surprising the Ligurian infantry, which had approached the camp in disorder.
- 13 Polyb. 2.28.9–30.9.
- 14 Polyb. 15.9.8, 15.12.5–14.9; Liv. 30.32.11–35.3; App. *Pun.* 43–7, offers a different, and more confused, account of the Roman order of battle.
- 15 Liv. 31.21.11–17.
- 16 After the cavalry slowed the Gallic advance, the Roman infantry line held firm, then began to advance. It is difficult to imagine how the Roman infantry could clear enough space between themselves and the Gauls to allow the cavalry to strike the Gallic front, or why they would want to retreat that far while remaining in the battle.

- 17 Liv. 33.36.8–13.
- 18 In Roman Imperial armies, *optiones* stood behind the line and used long staffs to drive back into position any men attempting to flee. See Speidel, *The Framework of an Imperial Legion*, Cardiff, National Museum of Wales, 1992, pp. 24–6.
- 19 Liv. 35.5.9–10: *Haec procella equestris primo confudit et turbavit deinde dissipavit aciem Gallorum, non tamen ut terga darent. Obstabant duces hastilibus caedentes terga trepidantium et redire in ordines cogentes; sed interequitantes alarii non patiebantur. Consul obstabatur milites ut paulum adniterentur; victoriam in manibus esse; dum turbatos et trepidantes viderent, instarent; si restitui ordines sivissent, integro rursus eos proelio et dubio dimicatu. Inferre vexillarios iussit signa. Omnes conisi tandem averterunt hostium. Postquam terga dabant et in fugam passim effundebantur, tum ad persequendos eos legionarii equites immissi.*
- 20 Liv. 40.40.2–5.
- 21 Liv. 40.40.5–8: *Id cum maiore vi equorum facietis, si effrenatos in eos equos immittitis; quod saepe Romanos equites cum magna laude fecisse sua memoriae proditum est. Dicto paruerunt, detractisque frenis bis ultro citroque cum magna strage hostium, infractis omnibus hastis, transcurrerunt. Dissipato cuneo, in quo omnis spes fuerat, Celtiberi trepidare et prope omnia pugna locum fugae circumspicere.*
- 22 It is not clear from the Latin exactly whose spears were breaking. Plausible arguments could be made for either side.
- 23 Liv. 40.40.9–10.
- 24 Walsh, *Livy Book XI*, Wiltshire, Aris & Phillips, 1996, p. 160.
- 25 Liv. 40.44.8–9.
- 26 Liv. 42.3.1–2.
- 27 Culham, “Chance, Command, and Chaos in Ancient Military Engagements,” pp. 191–205.
- 28 See ch. 3, p. 50.
- 29 Polyb. 10.23.1–10.
- 30 Liv. 31.35.1–7. On the provenance of the passage, see Briscoe, *A Commentary on Livy Books XXXI–XXXIII*, pp. 1–2.
- 31 The Numidians seem to have employed similar tactics. See Polyb. 3.116.5; Sall. *Iug.* 50.3–5; App. *Iber.* 25, 27.
- 32 Polyb. 3.115.1–3: οὐ γὰρ ἦν κατὰ νόμους ἐξ ἀναστροφῆς καὶ μεταβολῆς ὁ κίνδυνος. See p. 37.
- 33 Liv. 31.35.1–7; Liv. 31.35.3: *Credere regii genus pugnae quo adsueverant fore, ut equites in vicem insequentes refugientesque nunc telis uterentur, nunc terga darent.*
- 34 Estienne, *Thesaurus Graecae Linguae*, vol. 6, p. 654.
- 35 Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 20.2.1–3.
- 36 App. *Iber.* 25.
- 37 App. *Iber.* 27: οἱ μὲν ἵππεῖς οἱ τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἐκράτουν ὑπὸ τῆς αὐτῆς μηχανῆς, ἀμεταστρεπτὶ τοὺς Νομάδας διώκοντες, ὑποχωρεῖν εἰθισμένους καὶ ἐπελαύνειν οἷς τὰ ἀκόντια διὰ τὴν ἐγγύτητα οὐδὲν ἦν ἔτι χρήσιμα. (White translation).
- 38 Nolan, *Cavalry: Its History and Tactics*, London, Bosworth & Harison, 1853, pp. 279, 281–2, cited by Goldsworthy, *Roman Army at War*, p. 236.

- 39 Ticinus: Polyb. 10.3.4–5; Zama: Polyb. 15.12.5, Liv. 30.34.1; Magnesia: Liv. 37.42.1–3; Paus. 7.16.3. An additional example, referring to the period when citizens cavalry contingents no longer existed, is still a useful illustration of the dynamics of cavalry combat. According to Caes. *BCiv.* 2.34 Curio sent cavalry and two infantry cohorts down a hill to attack a force of cavalry and light infantry. The enemy cavalry failed to withstand the first rush and immediately fled, leaving the light infantry to be slaughtered.
- 40 Liv. 38.20.3.
- 41 Gallic auxiliaries rather than Romans.
- 42 Caes. *BGall.* 5.58: *praecipit atque interdicat, proterritis hostibus atque in fugam coniecit (quod fore, sicut accidit, videbat).*
- 43 Liv. 31.35.5: *equites, ut semel in hostem evecti sunt, stantibus equis, partim ex ipsis equis, partim desilientes immiscentesque se peditibus pugnabant.*
- 44 Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, pp. 146–53.
- 45 Goldsworthy, *Roman Army at War*, p. 237.
- 46 Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 20.2.1–3. See p. 64.
- 47 Verg. *Aen.* 5.580–5: *olli discurrere pares atque agmina terni diductis solvere choris rursusque vocati convertere vias infestaeque tela tulere. Inde alios ineunt cursus aliosque recursus adversi spatii, alternosque orbibus orbis impediunt, pugnaeque cient simulacra sub armis* (Fairclough translation).
- 48 Polyb. 3.65.8.
- 49 Polyb. 3.115.3.
- 50 Cited by Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, p. 148.
- 51 *Ibid.*, p. 150.
- 52 Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War*, pp. 176–8.
- 53 Polyb. 6.25.4.
- 54 Polyb. 3.65.3; cf. Liv. 21.46.6–7.
- 55 Polyb. 3.115; cf. Liv. 22.47.3.
- 56 Polyb. 11.21.3.
- 57 Liv. 31.35.3–7.
- 58 Polyb. 11.21.3–4.
- 59 Liv. 31.35.4–5.
- 60 Polyb. 10.3.4–5; Liv. 31.35.1–7.
- 61 Liv. 31.35.4–5.
- 62 Ellis, *Cavalry: the History of Mounted Warfare*, New York, Putnam, 1978, pp. 63–5.
- 63 Caes. *BGall.* 4.2: *Equestribus proeliis saepe ex equis desiliunt ac pedibus proeliantur, equosque eodem remanere vestigio adsuefecerunt, ad quos celeriter, cum usus est, recipiunt* (Edwards translation).
- 64 Caes. *BGall.* 4.12: *rursus resistentibus consuetudine sua ad pedes desilierunt, suffossis equis compluribusque nostris deiectis reliquos in fugam coniecerunt* (Edwards translation).
- 65 Brewitz, *Scipio Africanus Maior in Spanien 210–206*, Tübingen, H. Laup, 1914, p. 70, cited by Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, vol. 2, p. 298.
- 66 Sallust *Iug.* 50.3–5.
- 67 Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War*, p. 231.

- 68 Caes. *BCiv.* 1.55.70, *BAfr.* 66.
- 69 Polyb. 3.65.3; Liv. 21.26.6, 29.1–3.
- 70 Polyb. 3.69.5–8; Liv. 21.52.9–10.
- 71 Polyb. 3.102.3–4; Liv. 22.24.9–10.
- 72 Liv. 26.4.4–8.
- 73 Polyb. 11.22.5–6.
- 74 Liv. 31.35.1–2.
- 75 Sall. *Iug.* 46.6.
- 76 Caes. *BCiv.* 3.75.3.
- 77 Sall. *Iug.* 49.2–3.
- 78 Caes. *BGall.* 1.48: *Equitum milia erant sex, totidem numero pedites velocissimi ac fortissimi, quos ex omni copia singuli singulos suae salutis causa delegerant: cum his in proeliis versabantur. Ad eos se equites recipiebant: hi, si quid erat durius, concurrebant, si qui graviore vulnere accepto equo deciderat, circumsistebant; si quo erat longius prodeundum aut celerius recipiendum, tanta erat horum exercitatione celeritas, ut iubis equorum sublevati cursum adaequarent* (Edwards translation).
- 79 pp. 70–72.
- 80 Spence, *The Cavalry of Classical Greece*, pp. 112–14 discussed the reputation for savagery the horse had in Greece. More applicable for our present purposes is his note of the potential intimidation caused by the far greater mass of horse and rider.

5 COMBAT MOTIVATION

- 1 Du Picq, “Battle Studies,” p. 65.
- 2 Spence, *The Cavalry of Classical Greece*, pp. 34–5, 65–75, 79–86.
- 3 *Ibid.*, pp. 79–86 for a similar formulation of motivation for the Greek cavalry.
- 4 Xen. *Hip.* 6.
- 5 Rosenstein, *Imperatores Victi*, pp. 118–22 made this point about Roman commanders in general, and several of his examples are of cavalry commanders.
- 6 Polyb. 6.25.1–2.
- 7 In a legion with a paper strength of 4,200, the maniples of *bastati* and *principes* each contained 120 soldiers. Each maniple had two centurions and two *optiones* (rear-officers) for an officer to soldier ratio of 1:30. In a maniple of *triarii*, the paper-strength ratio would be 1:15. Polyb. 6.21.7–9, 24.1–5. A cavalry *turma* of thirty troopers included three *decuriones* and three rear-officers for a officer to trooper ratio of roughly 1:4.
- 8 Fawcett, *An Elucidation of Several Parts of His Majesty's Regulations for the Formations and Movements of Cavalry*, 4th ed., London, Printed for the War Office and sold by T. Egerton, London, 1808, p. 12 and pl. 3; See Appendix 2: Roman Cavalry Formations: Some Considerations.
- 9 Fawcett, *An Elucidation of Several Parts of His Majesty's Regulations*, *passim*.
- 10 Cruso, *Military Instructions for the Cavallrie: Or Rules and Directions for the Service of Horse*, Cambridge, printed by Roger Daniel, 1644, pp.

- 23–5; Fawcett, *An Elucidation of Several Parts of His Majesty's Regulations*, *passim*; von Schmidt, *Instructions for the Training, Employment, and Leading of Cavalry*, trans. C.W. Bowdler Bell, New York, Greenwood, 1968, pp. 36–80, pls 1 and 9. Leading from the front likely offered the same advantages to a Roman commander.
- 11 Rosenstein, *Imperatores Victi*, pp. 114–47.
- 12 Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, pp. 10–41; Rosenstein, *Imperatores Victi*, pp. 114–47.
- 13 For more on Roman standards of conduct in battle, see pp. 83–4, 91–5.
- 14 For these definitions as they apply to modern combat, see Kellett, *Combat Motivation*, Boston, Kluwer-Nijhoff, 1982, p. 46.
- 15 Liv. 9.46.15; Val. Max. 2.2.9; Plin. *HN* 15.19; *De vir. Ill.* 32.3. Cf. M. McDonnell, “Virtus as a Social, Religious, and Political Concept in Republican Rome”, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1990, pp. 397–8.
- 16 See ch. 1, p. 7.
- 17 Polyb. 3.26.10, 28.2.
- 18 Polyb. 31.29.1.
- 19 Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, pp. 10–53 described the vital importance of *virtus* to the aristocracy and the rest of the Roman citizenry. McDonnell, *Virtus* examined the meaning of *virtus* in the middle Republic and the changes in definition the term underwent in the late Republic. The primary definition of *virtus* in the middle Republic was martial courage, and only later association with the Greek term *ἀρετή* added other, ethical meanings to *virtus*.
- 20 Polyb. 6.39.1–11. Cf. Sall. *Iug.* where Metellus rewarded soldiers for distinguished services.
- 21 Note Polybius’ comment about the role of centurions in the Roman army (6.24.9): “they do not desire them so much to be men who will initiate attacks and open the battle, but men who will hold their ground when worsted and hard pressed and be ready to die at their posts” (Paton translation).
- 22 On the difference between group courage and individual courage, see Rosenstein, *Imperatores Victi*, pp. 97, 130–1.
- 23 Oakley, “Single Combat in the Roman Republic,” *CQ* 1985, vol. 35, pp. 392–410 collected all the known instances single combat in the Republic. His work provides details and additional evidence for the examples cited in the following notes. Mounted duels: T. Manlius Torquatus (Liv. 8.7.1–22), P. Scipio (Sil. It. 4.264–310), Claudius Asellus (Liv. 23.46.12–47.8), Artorius (Quadrigrarius frag. 56P), T. Quinctius Crispinus (Liv. 25.18.4–15), P. Scipio Aemilianus (Polyb. 35.5.1–2). Duels on foot: L. Siccus Dentatus (Dion. Hal. *Rom. Ant.* 10.37.3, Val. Max. 3.2.24, Plin. *HN* 7.101), T. Manlius Torquatus (Liv. 7.9.6–10.4), M. Valerius Corvus (Liv. 7.26.1–10).
- 24 A. Postumius Tubertus (Liv. 4.29.5–6), Drusus (Suet. *Tib.* 3.2), M. Claudius Marcellus (Plut. *Marc.* 2.1), M. Servilius Geminus Pulex (Liv. 45.39.16), Scipio Africanus (cf. Oakley, “Single Combat in the Roman Republic,” p. 395), Q. Occius Achilles (Val. Max. 3.2.21), C. Marius (Plut. *Mar.* 3.2), L. Opimius (Ampel. 22.4).
- 25 Liv. 23.46–7; see ch. 3, p. 42.

- 26 Liv. 25.18.1–15; see ch. 3, p. 42.
- 27 In general see Nicolet, “Les *Equites Campani* et leurs représentations figurées,” pp. 463–517. Nicolet argued these depictions were part of a Campanian epic tradition.
- 28 Polyb. 6.39.9–10.
- 29 On the role of *virtus* and political office, see Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, pp. 20–4; Rosenstein, *Imperatores Victi*, p. 131.
- 30 Polyb. 31.29.1.
- 31 Liv. 23.23.5–6.
- 32 Rosenstein, *Imperatores Victi*, p. 131.
- 33 Hopkins and Burton, “Political Succession in the Late Republic,” pp. 31–119.
- 34 Plut. *Marc.* 2.1–2. Rosenstein, *Imperatores Victi*, p. 131.
- 35 Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 1.5–6.
- 36 Wiseman, *New Men in the Roman Senate*, pp. 100, 105–7; Badian, “The Consuls 179–49 B.C.,” *Chiron*, 1990, vol. 20, pp. 371–413.
- 37 Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, pp. 17–25.
- 38 Plin. *HN* 7.101–6.
- 39 Liv. 45.39.17–19: *nudasse deinde se dicitur et, quo quaeque bello volnera accepta essent, rettulisse. Quae dum ostentat, adaperitis forte, quae velanda erant, tumor inguinum proximis risum movit. Tum “hoc quoque quod ridetis,” inquit “in equo dies noctesque persedendo habeo, nec magis me eius quam cicatricum harum pudet paenitetque, quando numquam mihi impedimento ad rem publicam bene gerendam domi militiaeque fuit. Ego hoc ferro saepe vexatum corpus vetus miles adulescentibus militibus ostendi. Galba nitens et integrum denu-det* (Bettenson translation).
- 40 Sall. *Iug.* 63.3–4: when Marius ran for the position of military tribune, most of the electorate did not recognize his face, but they knew of his deeds and voted him into office. See also Cic. *Mur.* 19–24 on the benefits of a distinguished military record achieved as a legate.
- 41 Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, p. 21.
- 42 Polyb. 6.54.3–4: οἱ νέοι παρορμῶνται πρὸς τὸ πᾶν ὑπομένειν ὑπὲρ τῶν κοινῶν πραγμάτων χάριν τοῦ τυχεῖν τῆς συνακολουθοῦσης τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς τῶν ἀνδρῶν εὐκλείας. πίστιν δ’ ἔχει τὸ λεγόμενον ἐκ τούτων. πολλοὶ μὲν γὰρ ἐμονομάχησαν ἐκουσίως Ῥωμαίων ὑπὲρ τῆς τῶν ὅλων κρίσεως, οὐκ ὀλίγοι δὲ προδήλους εἶλοντο θανάτους, τινὲς μὲν ἐν πολέμῳ τῆς τῶν ἄλλων ἔνεκεν σωτηρίας, τινὲς δ’ ἐν εἰρήνῃ χάριν τῆς τῶν κοινῶν πραγμάτων ἀσφαλείας (Paton translation).
- 43 See p. 85.
- 44 Frederiksen, “Campanian Cavalry: a Question of Origins,” p. 7.
- 45 *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- 46 Plaut. *Amph.* 645–53: *si mercedis datur mi, ut meus victor vir belli clueat. Satis mi esse ducam. Virtus praemium est optimum; virtus omnibus rebus anteit profecto: libertas salus vita res et parentes, patria et prognati tutantur, servantur. Virtus omnia in sese habet, omnia adsunt bona quem penest virtus.*
- 47 McDonnell, *Virtus*, p. 499.

- 48 Plaut. *Capt.* 690: *Qui per virtutem, periit, at non interit.* See McDonnell, *Virtus*, pp. 507–8.
- 49 Enn. *Ann.* 391 Vahl ed., cited by Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, p. 24: *nunc est ille dies quom gloria maxime sese nobis ostendat, si vivimus sive morimur.*
- 50 Plin. *HN.* 7.101–6: [Sergius] *secundo stipendio dextram manum perdidit, stipendiis duobus ter et vices vulneratus est, ob id neutra manu, neutro pede satis utilis, animo tantum salvo, plurimis postea stipendiis debilis miles. bis ab Hannibale captus – neque enim cum quolibet hoste res fuit – , bis vinculorum eius profugus, in viginti mensibus nullo non die in catenis aut compedibus custoditus. sinistra manu sola quater pugnavit, duobus equis insidente eo suffossis. dextram sibi ferream fecit, eaque religata proeliatus Cremonam obsidione exemit, Placentiam tutatus est, duodena castra hostium in Gallia cepit, quae omnia ex oratione eius apparent habita cum in praetura sacris arceretur a collegis ut debilis, quos hic coronarum acervos constructurus hoste mutato* (Rackham translation).
- 51 Sall. *Iug.* 85.29–30: *Non possum fidei causa imagines neque triumphos aut consulatus maiorum meorum ostentare, at, si res postulet, hastas, vexillum, phaleras, alia militaria dona, praeterea cicatrices adverso corpore. Hae sunt meae imagines, haec nobilitas, non hereditate relicta, ut illa illis, sed quae ego meis plurimis laboribus et periculis quaesivi* (Rolf translation). Cf. Plut. *Mar.* 9.
- 52 Cic. *De Or.* 2.124; Cic. *Flacc.* 98; Liv. *Per.* 70.
- 53 Dio 54.14.2–4.
- 54 Liv. 2.23.2–5.
- 55 Liv. 2.27.1–3.
- 56 Liv. 4.58.11–14.
- 57 Note again the role of *virtus* as Plautus has Alcmena describe it; see p. 90.
- 58 Plaut. *Truc.* 483–97: *Ne expectetis, spectatores, meas pugnas dum praedicam: manibus duella praedicare soleo, baud in sermonibus. Scio ego multos memoravisse milites mendacium: et Homerionidea et postilla mille memorari pote, qui et convicti et condemnati falsis de pugnis sient. Non laudandus cui plus credit qui audit quam ille qui videt: phris est oculatus testis unus quam auriti decem; qui audiunt audita dicunt, qui vident plane sciunt. Non placet quem scurrae laudant, manipularis mussitant, neque illi quorum lingua gladiatorum aciem praestringit domi. Strenui nimio plus prosunt populo quam arguti et cati: facile sibi facunditatem virtus argutam invenit.* McDonnell, *Virtus*, p. 579.
- 59 The demoralizing effect the front ranks of Gallic warriors had on the Romans at the battle of the Telamon (Polyb. 2.29.6.) was no doubt partially due to the fact that they stood completely naked, displaying their formidable physiques and gesturing at the Romans. At Cannae too, according to Polybius, the Gauls in Hannibal's battle line were naked (3.114.4).
- 60 Polyb. 31.29.1.
- 61 Polyb. 6.52.2–10.

- 62 Polyb. 6.52.11–55.4. See 6.39.1 where he considered the system of military rewards an excellent method of inspiring courageous deeds.
- 63 6.39.11: τοιαύτης δ' ἐπιμελείας οὔσης καὶ σπουδῆς περὶ τε τὰς τιμὰς καὶ τιμωρίας τὰς ἐν τοῖς στρατοπέδοις, εἰκότως καὶ τὰ τέλη τῶν πολεμικῶν πράξεων ἐπιτυχῇ καὶ λαμπρᾷ γίνεται δι' αὐτῶν (Paton translation).
- 64 6.11.3–9.
- 65 Recognized by Cheesman, *The Auxilia of the Roman Imperial Army*, pp. 7–8.
- 66 Polyb. 3.117.4–5.
- 67 For example, recall the instances when the Roman cavalry defeated the Numidians: Polyb. 3.45.1–3; Polyb. 3.69.7–14; Polyb. 14.8.5–8; App. *Iber.* 25,27.

6 DATING THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE CITIZEN CAVALRY CORPS

- 1 See Brunt, *Italian Manpower*, pp. 671–4, 677–83; Afzelius, *Die römische Kriegsmacht während der Auseinandersetzung mit den hellenistischen Grossmächten*, Aarhus, Denmark, Universitets forlaget, 1944, pp. 62, 72.
- 2 This situation persisted, as far as our evidence indicates, to the end of the Republic (see below, n. 22 for the types of cavalry in M. Antonius' expeditionary force against the Parthians). It is worth noting, however, that some Roman citizens did seem to provide forms of cavalry service in the Empire. The legionary cavalry contingents were presumably filled by citizens in the early Empire. It is debated, however, whether these contingents accompanied every legion. In any event, these legionary cavalry contingents were small forces of perhaps 120 men. These troopers were used primarily as scouts and couriers. This seems to be a natural extension of the service performed by equestrians in the Roman armies at the end of the Republic. For the reader interested in the Roman cavalry forces of the Empire and the bibliography on the subject, see Dixon and Southern, *The Roman Cavalry*.
- 3 Frag. 77; Belot, *Histoire des chevaliers romains*, vol. 2, Paris, A. Durand, 1872, p. 84; Hill, *Roman Middle Class*, p. 26.
- 4 Polyb. 6.20.9; Belot, *Histoire des chevaliers*, vol. 2, p. 84; Hill, *Roman Middle Class*, p. 26. See also Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, vol. 1, pp. 292–7, 656. Book 6 may have been published by 150. If, as Walbank suggested, Polybius continued to revise his work at least until 120, it seems unlikely that he would not have modified his account of the legionary cavalry if during that period the account had become obsolete.
- 5 Sall. *Iug.* 95.1.
- 6 Sall. *Iug.* 39.2, 43.4, 84.2, 90.2, 100.4.
- 7 Hill, *Roman Middle Class*, p. 26.
- 8 Madvig, *Kleine philologische Schriften*, pp. 502–3, 503 n. 1; Gelzer, *The Roman Nobility*, p. 12; Dixon and Southern, *The Roman Cavalry*, p. 22.
- 9 Val. Max. 5.8.4: *impetu Cimbrorum romani equites pulsi, deserto proconsule Catulo, urbem pavidam repeterent*. Cf. Front. *Strat.* 4.1.13, *Vir.* Ill. 72.10, Ampel. 19.10. See Gelzer, *The Roman Nobility*, p. 13.

- 10 Suet. *Gramm.* 9: *destitutus, primo apparituram magistratibus fecit; deinde in Macedonia corniculo, mox equo meruit.*
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 Nicolet, *L'Ordre équestre*, vol. 2, p. 965.
- 13 Caes. *B Gall.* 1.42.
- 14 Madvig, *Kleine philologische Schriften*, p. 501 n. 1 also noted App. *BCiv.* 1.102 where Caesar gave donatives to the army. The groups mentioned were soldiers, centurions, tribunes, and prefects of cavalry. The Roman cavalry, who traditionally received donatives several times greater than infantry, was not mentioned.
- 15 App. *BCiv.* 2.49.
- 16 Brunt, *Italian Manpower*, p. 465.
- 17 Cic. *Fam.* 2.17.7 (Cicero must also have been referring to auxiliary cavalry in *Fam.* 15.4.3); Plut. *Ant.* 37.3; App. *BCiv.* 4. 87–8.
- 18 Front. *Strat.* 4.32.
- 19 Plut. *Pomp.* 64.
- 20 Simply as an illustration of a elite youth serving under Pompey, note that Cicero's son Marcus commanded a cavalry *ala* for Pompey (Cic. *Off.* 2.45); it is not clear that Marcus actually saw active service.
- 21 App. *BCiv.* 4.88.
- 22 Plutarch describes Antonius' cavalry in the 30s in the following terms (Plut. *Ant.* 37.3): "There were of the Romans themselves, 60,000 foot-soldiers, together with the cavalry classed as Roman, namely, 10,000 Iberians and Celts (τὸ Ῥωμαίοις συντεταγμένον ἵππικόν, Ἰβερῶν καὶ Κελτῶν μύριοι); of the other nations there were 30,000, counting alike horsemen and light-armed troops" (Perrin translation). It would appear by this time, at least, the very term "Roman cavalry" had simply become a label referring to a class of cavalry and was completely divorced from actual citizen cavalry.
- 23 Gelzer, *The Roman Nobility*, p. 12; Parker, *The Roman Legions*, p. 43; cf. Carney, *Caius Marius*, Assen, Netherlands, R. Van Gorcum, 1961, p. 32 n. 162.
- 24 Madvig, *Kleine Philologische Schriften*, pp. 502–3; Madvig, *Die Verfassung und Verwaltung des römischen Staates*, vol. 2, Leipzig, Teubner, 1882, p. 495; Fröhlich, *Das Kriegswesen Caesars*, Zurich, F. Schulthess, 1891, p. 38.
- 25 Pace Brunt, *Italian Manpower*, p. 712, who suggested the citizen cavalry gradually disappeared without any sudden reform. Even with a gradual decline in cavalry service, one would have to explain what happened between the last day when citizen cavalry contingents served, and the first day when they never served again. Without some active decision by Roman policy-makers, how would citizens ultimately cease serving in the cavalry?
- 26 Marquardt, *Römische Staatsverwaltung*, vol. 2, Leipzig, S. Hirzel, 1878, vol. 2, p. 435; Parker, *The Roman Legions*, p. 28. Bell, "Tactical Reform in the Roman Republican Army," *Historia*, 1965, vol. 14, pp. 404–22 reviewed the scholarship on the Marian reforms and challenged the argument that Marius introduced cohort tactics.
- 27 Parker, *The Roman Legions*, p. 43.
- 28 As Carney, *Marius*, p. 32 n. 162 did (citing Parker as support).

- 29 Plut. *Mar.* 11–27 is the most extensive source for the conflict with the Cimbri and Teutones. Other sources include Front. *Strat.* 1.2.6; Val. Max. 5.8.4; Flor. 1.38.11,13, Plin. *HN* 22.11; Gran. Licin. 23.6–17, 24.24–7; Liv. *Per.* 68.
- 30 Bell, “Tactical Reform in the Roman Republican Army,” pp. 409–14.
- 31 See ch. 4, pp. 55–61.
- 32 Gabba, *Republican Rome, the Army and the Allies*, p. 15; Brunt, *Italian Manpower*, p. 406.
- 33 Brunt, *Italian Manpower*, pp. 438–9.
- 34 App. *BCiv.* 1.40.
- 35 App. *BCiv.* 1.49. Appian or his source also attributed this measure to the scarcity of soldiers. As an interesting but ultimately inconclusive side note, consider that the only military service that Cicero and Q. Hortensius ever performed prior to holding office, so far as we can tell, occurred during the Social War.
- 36 On the prejudice against enrolling freedmen in the legions, see Treggiari, *Roman Freedmen during the Late Republic*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1969, pp. 67–8.
- 37 A bare minimum of 8,900 equestrians were between the ages of 17 and 30, inclusive, and were prime recruits for the cavalry. See Appendix 3: The Size of the Cavalry Class and the Burden of Military Service Before the Social War. Using the method laid out in Appendix 3 n. 5, we can calculate the bare minimum of equestrians age 30–45 at about 7,300. The smallest possible number of equestrians technically liable for active duty (ages 17–45) at the beginning Social War was roughly 16,200. In all likelihood the figure was much larger.
- 38 App. *BCiv.* 1.42.
- 39 App. *Mith.* 30: *σὺν τέλεσι πέντε καὶ σπείραις τισὶ καὶ ἵλαις*.
- 40 *C.I.L.* 1.2.709 (*I.L.S.* 8888).
- 41 App. *BCiv.* 1.89.
- 42 Brunt, *Italian Manpower*, p. 445.
- 43 Hostages: Liv. 40.47.10; App. *Iber.* 48, 52.
- 44 In 181, Q. Fulvius Flaccus, governor of Nearer Spain, heard that the Celtiberians had mobilized a large force, and called in as many auxiliaries from the allies as possible (Liv. 40.30.1–2.) When the Roman forces under Servius Galba were soundly defeated, Galba fled to the city of Carmone where he gathered the remnants of his army and recruited an additional 20,000 allies (App. *Iber.* 58). When Scipio first invested Numantia, he sent letters round to all the allied tribes, telling them what troops he required of them (App. *Iber.* 90).
- 45 Brunt, *Italian Manpower*, p. 683.
- 46 Liv. 34.25.5, 26.10. A comparable instance can be found in the Second Macedonian War, when Masinissa sent 1,000 Numidian cavalry to the Roman army in Greece (Liv. 31.19.34), a force that would well outnumber the maximum of 600 citizen cavalry in a consular army.
- 47 Polyb. 6.34.5.
- 48 Polyb. 6.35.8–36.9.
- 49 Polyb. 10.3.4. On the presence of Gallic cavalry in Scipio’s army of 218, see Polyb. 3.45.2, 65.5, Liv. 21.26.6, 46.5.
- 50 Polyb. 3.67.1–9; Liv. 21.48.1–3.

- 51 See p. 101.
- 52 Gabba, *Republican Rome, the Army and the Allies*, pp. 93–4; Wiseman, “The Census in the First Century B.C.,” *JRS*, 1969, vol. 59, pp. 60–5; Paterson, “Politics in the Late Republic,” in T.P. Wiseman (ed.), *Roman Political Life 90 B.C. – A.D. 69*, Exeter, University of Exeter Press, 1985, p. 27; Yakobson, *Elections and Electioneering in Rome: a Study in the Political System of the Late Republic*, Stuttgart, Steiner, 1999, pp. 202–3.
- 53 See ch. 5, pp. 85–91.
- 54 Plut. *Sull.* 5.3; cf. Keaveney, *Sulla: the Last Republican*, London, Croom Helm, 1982, pp. 37–8. For later examples of reliance on auxiliaries in Asia minor, see App. *Mith.* 11, Cic. *Fam.* 14.4.3, 8.
- 55 Gelzer, *The Roman Nobility*, p. 12; Hill, *Roman Middle Class*, p. 27.
- 56 Front. *Strat.* 4.1.11.
- 57 Front. *Strat.* 4.1.12.
- 58 For other examples of infantry service as punishment for equestrians, see ch. 1, p. 7 n. 33.
- 59 Cic. *Phil.* 1.20.
- 60 Caes. *BGall.* 7.60.1, 7.65.5; *B.C.* 1.17.2, 1.23.1–2, 1.51.3, 1.77.2. cf. J. Harmand, *L’Armée et le soldat à Rome*, Paris, A.J. Picard et Cie, 1967, p. 384.
- 61 Suggested by Gelzer, *The Roman Nobility*, p. 12.
- 62 Cic. *Phil.* 12.27.
- 63 Cic. *Planc.* 27–8.
- 64 Cic. *Cael.* 73.
- 65 Cic. *Cael.* 11.
- 66 This may be what Cicero meant, according to Servius (*Cic. apud Serv. in Aen.* 5.546: *CUSTODEM AD SESE secundum Tullium, qui dicit ad militiam euntibus dari solitos esse custodes*), when he said it was customary for a guardian or tutor to accompany those entering military service. This passage refers to elite youths if it refers to anything, and suggests such youths might perform their limited military service in a sheltered environment.
- 67 Caes. *BGall.* 5.27.
- 68 Caes. *BGall.* 65: *a tribunis militum reliquisque equitibus Romanis atque evocatis equos sumit Germanisque distribuit.*
- 69 *BGall.* 7.59.
- 70 *BGall.* 5.27.
- 71 The only known exception is Pompey’s cavalry at Pharsalus.
- 72 Cicero is the earliest clear example of a magistrate who did not serve ten years in the military before holding public office (Sulla may have been a special case, but see Keaveney, “Young Sulla and the *Decem Stipendia*,” *RivFil*, 1980, vol. 108, pp. 165–73). M. Caelius served only a year or so as a *contubernalis* before holding office (Cic. *Cael.* 73). These two men are only the clearest examples: the *decem stipendia* had definitely lapsed by the first century. In general see also Wiseman, *New Men in the Roman Senate*, p. 143; Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, pp. 12, 257.

7 ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF PRESTIGE AND THE END OF CITIZEN CAVALRY SERVICE

- 1 The growing of grain, for example, did not require extensive labor except during harvest time. Erdkamp, "Agriculture, Underemployment, and the Cost of Rural Labor in the Roman World," *CQ*, 1999, vol. 49, pp. 557–8.
- 2 Saller, *Patriarchy, Property and Death in the Roman Family*, pp. 36–41. These figures, as noted in ch. 1 n. 7, come from the Empire and must be used with caution.
- 3 The scholarship on the motives and benefits of Roman imperialism is extensive. Badian, *Roman Imperialism in the Late Republic*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1968, pp. 1–15; Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves: Sociological Studies in Roman History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1978, pp. 25–47; Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome, passim*; Gruen, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984, pp. 288–315; Harris, "Roman Warfare in the Economic and Social Context of the Fourth Century B.C.," in W. Elder (ed.), *Staat und Staatlichkeit in der frühen römischen Republik*, Stuttgart, F. Steiner, 1990, pp. 494–510.
- 4 Marius distinguished himself in battle while his commander, Scipio Aemilianus, watched. According to Plutarch, Scipio appreciated Marius' martial merits and encouraged him to embark on a political career (Plut. *Mar.* 3–4.). Even elite foreigners could build important contacts through military service. While serving in the Roman army, Jugurtha caught Scipio's eye and built friendships with members of the Roman elite (Sall. *Iug.* 7.3–7, 13.5–6). A century later Cicero reported L. Murena earned official praise from his commander while serving as a legate and that a military reputation brought one a strong claim to the consulship (Cic. *Mur.* 21–2).
- 5 Harris, "Roman Warfare in the Economic and Social Context of the Fourth Century B.C.," pp. 503–4. Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome*, pp. 380–93, asserted that Romans did engage in trade, and the Roman aristocracy owned farms cultivated by slaves even at the end of the fourth century, a product of the wars fought earlier in the century. It is important to note again that the economic development of the second century was a matter of scale and degree. There is little doubt that the economic benefits of successful wars were already known to the Romans in the fourth century. By the same token, it is undeniable that the second century conquests and the wealth generated from those conquests dwarfed the wars of the fourth century.
- 6 As a crude comparison consider the property values of the following Romans (all figures from Shatzman, *Senatorial Wealth and Roman Politics*, Brussels, Latomus, 1975, pp. 18, 35: Scipio Africanus (cos. 205) HS 4,800,000, Aemilius Paullus (cos. 182) HS 1,120,000 (although Paullus was known as a senator with only a modest fortune), Scipio Aemilianus (cos. 147) HS 3,800,000. Consider then the fortunes of men from the late Republic: Cato Minor (pr. 54) HS 3,600,000, Q. Malleolus (qu. 80) HS 2,500,000, and Cicero (cos. 63) HS 13,000,000, not to mention the astronomically wealthy Pompey Crassus and Lucullus.

- The wealthy equestrian Roscius owned property worth substantially more (HS 6,000,000; Cic. *Rosc. Am.* 20) than the property of the great conquerors Scipio Africanus and Aemilianus. The amount of property owned by an individual seems to have increased greatly over the last two centuries of the Republic. See also Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, pp. 48–56; Stockton, *The Gracchi*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1979, pp. 6–22.
- 7 See Appendix 3: The Size of the Cavalry Class and the Burden of Military Service before the Social War.
 - 8 Liv. 27.11.14.
 - 9 Polyb. 6.19.2.
 - 10 Plut. *C. Gracc.* 2.5.
 - 11 Polyb. 6.19.5.
 - 12 Astin, *The Lex Annalis before Sulla*, Brussels, Latomus, pp. 43–4.
 - 13 I agree with Nicolet, “Le cens senatorial sous la république et sous Auguste,” *JRS*, 1976, vol. 66, pp. 20–30 that office holders in practice had to possess the equestrian census.
 - 14 Mommsen, *Römisches Staatsrecht*, 3rd ed., vol. 1, p. 505; Astin, *The Lex Annalis before Sulla*, pp. 43–4.
 - 15 See Smith, “Pompey’s Conduct in 80 and 77 BC,” *Phoenix*, 1960, vol. 14, pp. 11–12 n. 65 for the relevant passage and translation of the *Tabula Heracleensis*.
 - 16 Wiseman, *New Men in the Roman Senate*, p. 143; Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, pp. 12, 257; Keaveney, “Young Sulla and the Decem Stipendia,” pp. 165–73.
 - 17 Liv. 39.9.2, 19.3–4.
 - 18 *Lex Acilia* 76–9. It is very likely that any Romans who would prosecute would belong to the cavalry class, that is, they would be men of some status and education.
 - 19 Gelzer, *The Roman Nobility*, pp. 70–86; Wiseman, *New Men in the Roman Senate*, pp. 35–6.
 - 20 Although this did not stop advocates from profiting through inheritances and low interest loans from their clients. See Shatzman, *Senatorial Wealth and Roman Politics*, pp. 70–3 whose comments surely must apply to non-senatorial advocates as well.
 - 21 Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 1.4.
 - 22 See Suet. *Gramm.* 1–2, *Rhet.* 1 for the development of Greek grammar and rhetoric at Rome. Cf. Clarke, *Rhetoric at Rome: a Historical Survey*, London, Cohen & West, 1953, p. 10. Cato is an example of the state of oratory in the late third and early second century. He seems to have received no formal rhetorical training: he himself wrote the first manual on Latin oratory, and it was not until the early first century that the first school of Latin rhetoric opened (Suet. *Gramm.* 16.2).
 - 23 Cic. *De Or.* 14–15: *Nam posteaquam, imperio omnium gentium constituto, diurnitas pacis otium confirmavit, nemo fere laudis cupidus adolescens non sibi ad dicendum studio omni enitendum putavit . . . Excitabat eos magnitudo et varietas, multitudoque in omni genere causarum . . .*
 - 24 Cic. *Brut.* 106.

- 25 On the role of secret ballots in weakening the influence of the aristocracy at elections, see Cic. *Leg.* 3.34–5.
- 26 An important point noted by Frier, *The Rise of the Roman Jurists: Studies in Cicero's pro Caecina*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1985, pp. 276–7.
- 27 One of Cato's famous dictums was "grasp the subject, the words will follow" (*rem tene verba sequentur*). See Clarke, *Rhetoric at Rome: a Historical Survey*, p. 11.
- 28 Cic. *Off.* 2.47. Cic. *De Or.* 16–21 is an incredibly ambitious list, as Cicero himself acknowledged, of the subjects in which an orator should be versed. Nevertheless, it does indicate at least that a good orator was expected to be educated and trained well. This is borne out by Cicero's own education (found in *Brut.* 306–12). Nor was Cicero unique in his education, others followed a similar practice. On an orator's course of study in the late Republic, see Clarke, *Rhetoric at Rome: a Historical Survey*, pp. 15–20.
- 29 Cic. *Amic.* 1; *Brut.* 306.
- 30 Cic. *Cael.* 9.
- 31 Daly, "Roman Study Abroad," *AJP*, 1950, vol. 71, pp. 40–58.
- 32 Cic. *Leg.* 1.13, *De Or.* 2.2, *Fam.* 13.17, *Cael.* 9, 18, 72–3. We might also consider M. Terentius Varro who, although from a noble family, first practiced oratory with industry and ability, then attached himself to the *publicani*, and finally was elected quaestor for 46 (Cic. *Fam.* 13.10). The list of elite youths practicing oratory is substantial. For a few examples see Tac. *Dial.* 34, Plut. *C. Gracc.* 1, Plut. *Sert.* 2, Plut. *Brut.* 2.
- 33 Wiseman, *New Men in the Roman Senate*, p. 36.
- 34 Frier, *Rise of the Roman Jurists*, p. 276.
- 35 Young Scipio Aemilianus complained that his contemporaries thought him quiet, indolent, and lacking a Roman's energetic character because he chose not to plead in the law courts (Polyb. 31.23.11–12). Cf. Cic. *Cael.* 73; Cic. *Off.* 2.47; Tac. *Dial.* 34.7.
- 36 Cic. *De Or.* 14 said young men who desired praise (*laus*) practiced oratory.
- 37 On the importance of political oratory in the Ciceronian Age, see Millar, *The Crowd in Rome in the Late Republic*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1998.
- 38 This, reportedly, was Sulpicius' claim (Cic. *Mur.* 19–21), and Cicero confirmed his own belief that remaining in Rome was valuable even as he mocked Sulpicius.
- 39 On the changing socio-economic composition of the legions, see Brunt, "The Army and the Land in the Roman Revolution," *JRS*, 1962, vol. 52, p. 74; Brunt, *Italian Manpower*, pp. 404–6, Rich, "The Supposed Manpower Shortage of the Later Second Century B.C.," pp. 277–9; Rosenstein, "Republican Rome," in K. Raaflaub and Rosenstein (eds), *War and Society in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds*, Washington, D.C., Center for Hellenic Studies, 1999, pp. 208–9.
- 40 Wiseman, *New Men in the Roman Senate*, p. 36.
- 41 Frier, *Rise of the Roman Jurists*, pp. 276–7.
- 42 Polyb. 31.23.10–11.

- 43 Caesar, Plutarch had read, took pains to be second only to Cicero in oratory (Plut. *Caes.* 3); Pompey resumed the practice of declaiming just before the civil war (Suet. *Rhet.* 1).
- 44 Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage*, vol. 1, pp. 35–42; Lévy, *The Economic Life of the Ancient World*, trans. J.G. Baram, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1967, p. 53; Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome*, pp. 394–7. We would do well to remember Cornell's insistence that Rome did not have an economy near the subsistence-level and wholly without trade at the end of the fourth century (*The Beginnings of Rome*, pp. 380–9). Nevertheless, it is clear that great economic development occurred between the late fourth and first century with the development of coinage, the great expansion of trade, and the development of non-staple market agriculture in the Roman *suburbium*.
- 45 The bibliography on the economic and social changes stimulated in Roman Italy by the acquisition of an empire is substantial. See Badian, *Roman Imperialism in the Late Republic*, p. 19; Shatzman, *Senatorial Wealth and Roman Politics*, pp. 84–98; Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, pp. 1–98; Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, pp. 54–104; Stockton, *The Gracchi*, pp. 6–22. On the development of investment agriculture in the late second and first centuries, see Purcell, "The Roman Villa and the Landscape of Production," in T. Cornell and K. Lomas (eds), *Urban Society in Roman Italy*, New York, St. Martin's, 1995, pp. 151–79, and Morley, *Metropolis and Hinterland: the City of Rome and the Italian Economy 200 B.C.–A.D. 200*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- 46 See n. 45.
- 47 Badian, *Publicans and Sinners*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1972, pp. 61–2.
- 48 Polyb. 6.17.2–3: πολλῶν γὰρ ἔργων ὄντων τῶν ἐκδιδομένων ὑπὸ τῶν τιμητῶν διὰ πάσης Ἰταλίας εἰς τὰς ἐπισκευὰς καὶ κατασκευὰς τῶν δημοσίων, ἃ τις οὐκ ἂν ἐξαριθμῆσαιτο ῥαδίως, πολλῶν δὲ ποταμῶν, λιμένων, κηπίων, μετὰλλων. χώρας, συλλήβδην ὅσα πέπτωκεν ὑπὸ τὴν Ῥωμαίων δυναστείαν (Paton translation).
- 49 On the impact of the Asian taxes on Rome, see Badian, *Publicans and Sinners*, pp. 62–72; Badian, *Roman Imperialism in the Late Republic*, p. 47.
- 50 Hopkins made the simple but essential point that the increase in productivity that resulted from the formation of large estates would have been useless without the creation of a market (*Conquerors and Slaves*, p. 107).
- 51 Loane, *Industry and Commerce of the City of Rome*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1937, pp. 11–33; Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, p. 73; Morley, *Metropolis and Hinterland*, p. 142.
- 52 Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, pp. 48–9; Stockton, *The Gracchi*, pp. 7–8.
- 53 Brunt, *Italian Manpower*, p. 383; Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, pp. 104–6.
- 54 Morley, *Metropolis and Hinterland*, p. 71. Varro *Rust.* 1.16.3 noted that if a villa was located near a city – not specifically Rome – it would be profitable to grow the luxury flowers demanded in the city.

- 55 Morley, *Metropolis and Hinterland*, pp. 57, 85–6.
- 56 Purcell, “Wine and Wealth in Ancient Italy,” *JRS*, 1985, vol. 75, pp. 6–7.
Cf. Purcell, “The Roman Villa and the Landscape of Production,” pp. 156–7; Morley, *Metropolis and Hinterland*, pp. 112–13
- 57 As opposed to “agriculture”, the cultivation of the fields on an estate.
- 58 Varro *Rust.* 3.3.6–10.
- 59 Morley, *Metropolis and Hinterland*, p. 88.
- 60 Varro *Rust.* 3.16.10–11.
- 61 Varro *Rust.* 3.2.15–16.
- 62 Varro *Rust.* 3.5.8, Strabo was identified as an *equus* by Nicolet, *L'Ordre équestre*, vol. 2, p. 922.
- 63 Varro *Rust.* 3.7.10.
- 64 See p. 126.
- 65 Purcell, “The Roman Villa and the Landscape of Production,” p. 156.
- 66 Crawford, “Money and Exchange in the Roman World,” *JRS*, 1970, vol. 60, p. 42.
- 67 For some forms of largesse in the first century, see Cic. *Off.* 2.58.
- 68 Shatzman, *Senatorial Wealth and Roman Politics*, pp. 88–9. For a recent look at largesse and bribery in Roman elections, see Jakobson, *Elections and Electioneering in Rome*, pp. 22–43.
- 69 Brunt, *Social Conflicts in the Roman Republic*, New York, W.W. Norton & Co., 1971, p. 63; Shatzman, *Senatorial Wealth and Roman Politics*, p. 89; Jakobson, *Elections and Electioneering in Rome*, pp. 25–6.
- 70 Wiseman, “The Census in the First Century bc,” pp. 65–7.
- 71 According to Pliny, the house of Aemilius was as fine as any in Rome in the year 78; by 43 it was not even among the top hundred (Plin. *HN.* 36.109). Cf. Frederiksen, “Caesar, Cicero and the Problem of Debt,” *JRS*, 1966, vol. 56, p. 128. In general see Shatzman, *Senatorial Wealth and Roman Politics*, pp. 11–46, 94–8.
- 72 Shatzman, *Senatorial Wealth and Roman Politics*, p. 96 for sources and commentary.
- 73 Varro *Rust.* 2.2; Purcell, “The Roman Villa and the Landscape of Production,” pp. 151–7 stressed the important point that only in rare cases was a villa, even a very luxurious one, without any productive functions.
- 74 Varro *Rust.* 1.4.2; As Rawson, “The Ciceronian Aristocracy and its Properties,” *Roman Culture and Society: The Collected Papers of Elizabeth Rawson*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1991, p. 208 noted, the productive estates of an elite Roman and his favorite residence might not be in the same place. Purcell, “The Roman Villa and the Landscape of Production,” pp. 151–7 correctly pointed out, however, that rarely were villas completely unproductive and extremely luxurious villas would still produce.
- 75 Purcell, “The Roman Villa and the Landscape of Production,” *passim*.
- 76 Cicero modestly – from the perspective of the elite – spent HS 20,400 for some Megarian statues (*Att.* 1.8.2). According to Pliny, Hortensius paid HS 144,000 for a picture, Caesar paid 80 talents (HS 4,800,000) for two pictures, Lucullus’ son wished to pay HS 1,000,000 for a statue, Cato paid HS 800,000 for a tablecloth, and Cicero himself paid HS 500,000 for a table (Plin. *NH* 7.126, 8.196, 13.93, 35.130, 156). See

- Shatzman, *Senatorial Wealth and Roman Politics*, p. 97 n. 58. These sums were noted because they were exceptional, but this is precisely the point: aristocrats were spending phenomenal sums of money to appear exceptional.
- 77 See ch. 1, pp. 5–6.
- 78 An important point noted by Brunt, *The Fall of the Roman Republic*, p. 145.
- 79 Wiseman, *New Men in the Roman Senate*, pp. 89–94 on the popularity of the decurionate and the expenses associated with municipal office.
- 80 Cic. *Fam* 7.20.1. Cicero referred to beautiful trees that grew there and drew tourists but blocked an otherwise extensive view. He also urged Trebatius to hold onto this property since it was good to have a beautiful, secluded house and estate in order to escape the troubles of the world.
- 81 Cic. *Off.* 3.58.
- 82 Cic. *Rosc. Am.* 15.
- 83 As Wiseman, *New Men in the Roman Senate*, p. 33 noted, one of the obligations of guest-friendship was to entertain a friend when they traveled in your region and, “a Roman senator in an Italian town would not have stayed at the house of a nobody.”
- 84 It is worth considering again how substantial a fortune of HS 400,000 was. A Roman worth HS 400,000 might own 400 *iugera* (see Shatzman, *Senatorial Wealth and Roman Politics*, pp. 480–1). The income from such estates could amount to HS 240,000 if the estates consisted solely of vineyards and probably would not be less than HS 40,000 *per annum* (Shatzman, *Senatorial Wealth and Roman Politics*, pp. 47–8). This was a substantial income so long as we do not compare it to the resources of the extremely rich; instead we might compare this income to the second century centurion’s pay of HS 960 or 1440 *per annum* (from Polyb. 6.39.12; on the difficulties of monetary conversion here, see Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, vol. 1, p. 722).
- 85 Wiseman, *New Men in the Roman Senate*, p. 50.
- 86 Cic. *Fam.* 2.3.1: *ut iis bonis quae tibi natura, studio, fortuna data sunt facilius omnia quae sunt amplissima in republica consequi possis quam muneribus; quorum neque facultatem quisquam admiratur (est enim copiarum, non virtutis)* (Williams translation).
- 87 Cic. *Mur.* 40–1; Cic. *Mur.* 38–9. Cicero partially ascribed Murena’s success to the splendid games he offered.
- 88 Liv. 45.15.1–2; Treggiari, *Roman Freedmen*, pp. 43–6.
- 89 Treggiari, *Roman Freedmen*, pp. 233, 239.
- 90 Wiseman, *New Men in the Roman Senate*, p. 71.
- 91 Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, trans. A. Shapiro, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1988, pp. 15–6; *cf.* Treggiari, *Roman Freedmen*, p. 96.
- 92 Treggiari, *Roman Freedmen*, pp. 52–67, 233, 239. Treggiari noted that these sons of freedmen most often acquired a higher status through the aid of their patrons although some appear to have succeeded on their own. In any event the wealth of these freedmen’s sons was the key to their ability to reach a higher status-level.

- 93 Plut. *Crass.* 2; Cic. *Off.* 1.25; Plin. *HN.* 33.134.
- 94 Badian, *Roman Imperialism in the Late Republic*, pp. 81–2.
- 95 Brunt, *Italian Manpower*, p. 394.
- 96 Gell. *NA* 2.24.
- 97 Cic. *Rosc. Am.* 18.
- 98 Cic. *Rosc. Am.* 39.
- 99 Cic. *Rosc. Am.* 47, 48.
- 100 Figures from Saller, *Patriarchy, Property and Death in the Roman Family*. I have roughly averaged the figures from table 3.1e “ordinary” (p. 52) and table 3.2e “senatorial” (p. 58).
- 101 On the complexities of growing grapes and producing wine, see Purcell, “Wine and Wealth in Ancient Italy,” pp. 3–5; cf. Purcell, “The Roman Villa and the Landscape of Production,” pp. 156–7.
- 102 Morley, *Metropolis and Hinterland*, p. 159.
- 103 See above pp. 126–7.
- 104 Cic. *Rosc. Am.* 48 (the full passage): *sed permultos et ego novi et, nisi me fallit animus, unus quisque vestrum, qui et ipsi incensi sunt studio, quod ad agrum colendum attinet, vitamque banc rusticam, quam tu probro et crimini putas esse oportere, et honestissimam et suavissimam esse arbitrantur* (Freese translation).
- 105 Cic. *Rosc. Am.* 43.
- 106 It is worth noting again that perhaps 50% of elite youths had lost their father by the age of 20, and 70% had lost their father by the age of 30 (see Saller, *Patriarchy, Property and Death in the Roman Family*, pp. 52, 58). Most heirs received their inheritance while they were still young men.
- 107 Shatzman, *Senatorial Wealth and Roman Politics*, p. 394.
- 108 Cic. *Att.* 6.1.3.
- 109 Cic. *Att.* 5.21.10–13, 6.1.5–6.17.
- 110 Cic. *Att.* 5.21.10.
- 111 Cic. *Att.* 5.21.10; cf. Cic. *Att.* 6.1.6.
- 112 Cic. *Att.* 6.1.4.
- 113 See pp. 131–2.
- 114 Cic. *Fam.* 7.10.2, 11.2.
- 115 Cic. *Fam.* 7.10.1; Cicero initially mentioned Testa’s skill as a lawyer when recommending him to Caesar (*Fam.* 7.5.3); on Testa’s service in general, see Cic. *Fam.* 7.5, 6.1, 7.1, 8.1–3, 13.1, 16.3, 17.1–3.
- 116 Wiseman, “The Ambitions of Quintus Cicero,” *JRS*, 1966, vol. 56, p. 108; Shatzman, *Senatorial Wealth and Roman Politics*, pp. 64, 944.
- 117 Caes. *BGall.* 5.24, 38–41, etc.
- 118 Nor were these expectations mere wishful thinking. Pompey’s staff officers received HS 100,000,000 between them as a reward for their services in the eastern Mediterranean. See Badian, *Roman Imperialism in the Late Republic*, p. 81.
- 119 Even in the Principate we see Tacitus describing the advocacy of the late Republic as if it were a battle (*Dial.* 34).
- 120 Pace Nicolet, “Armée et société à Rome sous la république: à propos de l’ordre équestre,” in J-P Brisson (ed.), *Problemes de la guerre Rome*, Paris, Mouton, 1969, pp. 127–32, who indicated that Romans of the cavalry class served as simple soldiers. His purpose was to demonstrate

that cavalry service was not honorary and without real military service obligations. His evidence comes almost without exception from the period before the citizen cavalry disappeared. Those instances that may refer to military service after the disappearance of citizen cavalry are ambiguous (Cicero, for example, certainly seems to have performed a privileged form of service in the Social War).

APPENDIX 2: ROMAN CAVALRY FORMATIONS

- 1 Goldsworthy, *Roman Army at War*, pp. 182–3.
- 2 Goldsworthy, *Roman Army at War*, p. 176.

APPENDIX 3: THE SIZE OF THE CAVALRY CLASS AND THE BURDEN OF CAVALRY SERVICE BEFORE THE SOCIAL WAR

- 1 Polyb. 2.24.14.
- 2 In reality the figure will have been significantly larger, probably by many thousands. Polybius counted the Sabine cavalry separately in his figure for 225 although they were made *cives optimo iure* in 268 (Vel. Pat. 1.14.7): the Sabines, and others enjoying the same status would have been part of the cavalry class. Throughout the second century a number of Italian towns gained full citizenship, and the cavalry of these towns would only increase the overall size of the cavalry class. Furthermore, we do not know for certain whether *cives sine suffragio* served in the cavalry. If they did, then every new *municipium* would increase the size of the cavalry class. We are certainly safe taking 23,000 as a minimum: the cavalry class could not have been smaller at the end of the second century.
- 3 For 17 as the age of eligibility for cavalry service, see Liv. 27.11.15.
- 4 Found in Parkin, *Demography and Roman Society*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992, p. 147. Parkin does an excellent job discussing the variables on the model life table and their significance, as well as stressing the limitations of the life tables, pp. 70–85.
- 5 Using the life table in Parkin, *Demography*, p. 147 – which breaks down ages into five year groups – 42.73% of the population should fall between 0 and 19 years of age, inclusive. To determine the percentage between 0 and 17 we must do the following: each year between 15 and 19 represents roughly an additional 1.892% of the population (divide the percentage of the population between 15 and 19 (C15 = 9.46%) by the number of years in the age group (five) to get 1.892%). So subtract the percentage of 19-year-olds and the percentage of 18-year-olds ($2 \times 1.892\% = 3.784\%$) from the total percentage of the population from 0–19, inclusive, (42.73%) to get the percentage of the population between 0 and 17, inclusive (38.946%).
- 6 Using the life table in Parkin, *Demography*, p. 147 – which breaks down ages into five year groups – 26.37% of the population falls between 15 and 29 years of age inclusive. To determine the percentage between 17 and 30, inclusive, takes several steps. As we know from the

- previous calculation, each year between 15 and 19 represents roughly an additional 1.892% of the population. Subtract the percentage of 15-year-olds and 16-year-olds ($2 \times 1.892\% = 3.784\%$) from the percentage of 15–29-year-olds to get the percentage between 17 and 29 ($26.37\% - 3.784\% = 22.586\%$). Each year between 30 and 34 represents 1.472% of the population (divide the percentage of the population between 30 and 34 ($C_{30} = 7.36\%$) by the number of years in the age group (five) to get 1.472%). Add the percentage of 30-year-olds (1.472%) to the percentage of men 17–29 to get the total percentage between 17 and 30, inclusive, ($22.586\% + 1.472\% = 24.058\%$).
- 7 It is important to remember we are not speaking about the average service required in practice. We do not know what that figure was. What we do know is the burden of service if each individual served the same length of time. This tells us only what an individual's expected length of service might be.
- 8 It is worth running through some figures. Each of the 9,000 cavalry serving 2.8 years could supply the 25,350 cavalry needed during an average thirteen-year period: 4,500 of these men could each serve 5.6 years; 2,535 young men could each serve ten years to supply the needed cavalry.
- 9 Mommsen, *Römische Forschungen*, Berlin, Weidmann, 1879, vol. 2, p. 404.

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